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SATURDAY EVENING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

NATURAL HISTORY OF ENTHUSIASM.

—— Οὐ δὴ τέλος ἡ ἀνάπαυσις.
γίνεται γὰρ ἕνεκα τῆς ἐνεργείας.

HINGHAM:

PUBLISHED BY C. & E. B. GILL.

SOLD BY PERKINS & MARVIN, AND CROCKER & BREWSTER, BOSTON: D. F. ROBINSON & CO., HARTFORD: DURRIE & PECK, NEW-HAVEN COLLINS & HANNAY, AND J. LEAVITT, NEW-YORK: TOWAR & HOGAN, AND GRIGG & ELLIOT, PHILADELPHIA: AND ARMSTRONG & PLASKET, BALTIMORE.

1833.

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Number

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ALTHOUGH the Author dedicates his pen to the service of Religion, he would not seem (laymen as he is) to trench, either upon the season, or the office of public instruction. But there remains open to him the SATURDAY EVENING, which devout persons, whose leisure permits them to do so, are accustomed to devote to preparatory meditation.

The subject and spirit of some of the following pages may perhaps convey the idea that the title of the volume has a double significance, and is intended to refer to the expectation, now so generally entertained among Christians, that our own times are precursive of the era of REST which has been promised to the Church and to the world.—The Author does not deny that an allusion of this sort has been present to his mind; and he will grant, moreover, that his belief on this head has at once furnished no small part of the motive of his undertaking, and given direction, often, to his thoughts.

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SATURDAY EVENING.

I.

THE HOUR OF HOPE AND DIFFIDENCE.

"That day was the Preparation."

No position of the human mind is more peculiar than the one it occupies when, at the same moment, the reasons of hope are irrefragable, and the motives for despondency are overwhelming. It is indeed a circumstance of common occurrence for a fond but ill-grounded wish to be contending against the authority of facts and truth, and striving to maintain its place in contempt of all probability. So frequent are those contests between our desires and our sober sense, that a habit is generated, in all but the most frigid minds, of thinking that a natural antipathy exists between hope and reason. A strange emotion belongs therefore to those rare occasions when, although hope and reason are seen to be consorted, neither can well be listened to.

Religious hopes, more often perhaps than any other kind, have been liable to this sort of conflict; and it has so happened because, while religion presents the brightest and the most extensive prospects, and possesses too the firmest proofs—the general and visible current of human affairs sets in an opposite line, and seems continually to be mocking every valid and consolatory expectation.

More than a few signal instances might be gathered from the pages of sacred history (ancient and modern) in which a belief that could not be surrendered, because it rested on the most solid ground, has been almost forcibly expelled from the minds of the pious by the contrary evidence of actual facts. And it has usually happened that the stress of this controversy between hope and fear, has fallen upon the moment which immediately preceded the triumph of the former. But again, this triumph has very often been abated by the small resemblance which the happy reality, when it made its appearance, bore to the expectation that had been indulged concerning it.

The crisis of religious advancement—the very hour when a fading order of things has become obsolete, and has given way to a better—the silent *juncture of eras* (*συντέλεια τῶν αἰώνων*) has usually, or perhaps in every instance, combined these peculiar characteristics, and has brought into collision hope and dejection; both to be succeeded by that which hope could hardly recognize as its archetype.

To name at once the most pertinent and complete of all instances, we must fix upon those dim hours of dismay to the scattered followers of Christ, which immediately preceded the bringing in of light and immortality for mankind. The companions of the ministry of Jesus knew far too much of his divine power and majesty, to throw up their profession of his Messiahship, even when it seemed utterly irrational any longer to maintain it; for their Master, instead of scattering with a word the mad hostility of his foes, had yielded—had been overcome—had actually expired upon the tree of ignominy. And yet these simple minds—"slow of heart," and unmindful of the plain forewarnings they had received, and fraught with egregious

suppositions, knew far too little of the economy of that kingdom of heaven of which they were to be the ministers, to put a true interpretation upon the sad events they had witnessed. Hope was overthrown; and yet could not be abandoned. The men of Galilee had "trusted that this Jesus was he who should have redeemed Israel." But how indulge this belief, while he lay a mangled corpse in the sepulchre?—or how resign it, when his mighty miracles and doctrine were fresh in their recollection?

That Sabbath was indeed a signal day; although all things shewed the same face as heretofore in the thronged streets of the Holy City, and in the courts of the Temple. But among the worshippers upon the hill of Zion there were not a few troubled hearts. Can we imagine that the Rulers and the Rabbis were content with their success, and quite at ease? Or did the Priest gaze without dismay upon the torn veil, and upon the desecrated mysteries of the Holiest? This may not be thought:—the infatuation of crime dissolves, at the moment when crime is perpetrated: and it is not improbable that, in the mind of some, at least, a ghastly fear had already succeeded to the joy of gratified revenge. And were there not multitudes of the people who, though in favour and affection more unstable than the sea, now regretted that they had drawn upon themselves the blood of one whom so lately they hailed as the son of David?

But in what spirit did John, and Peter, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the other devout companions of the Lord, attend the Temple worship on that Sabbath? They joined in prayer and praise like others; but it was as with a sword in the heart. And was it not a day of doubt and alarm, or suspense, and of dread expectation, or of pallid, misgiving triumph, in the unseen world, and among con-

flicting orders of the spiritual economy ?—On this ground we may not admit surmises.—But it was the day upon which should hinge all former and all future events in the history of man. It was the day in which the Redemption of the world awaited its consummation, and its proof. The sun of that day went down in clouds ; but before it again appeared, a Brighter Light than that of the sun had arisen upon the nations !

Instances less signal indeed, but bearing the same character, might be chosen at several points in the subsequent history of Christianity.—As when the rage of persecutors, Pagan, Mahometan, or Popish, had so nearly effected the extinction of the Gospel, that nothing seemed more likely, on the ground of natural probability, than that the religion of which it was said that it was to endure for ever, should almost immediately cease to be spoken of among men. And yet, in several of these hours of darkness, a new expansion of the Divine efficacy of the Gospel was near at hand. If, from the small number of instances which the religious history of mankind presents, we might at all gather a general rule, it would be of this sort—That the hour of Preparation for a better order of things is *not a time of favourable appearances ;* but the reverse ; and that nevertheless, at such a time, human affairs are actually tending towards the approaching change. But shall it ever come within the reach of the sagacity of man to discern, beneath the surface of events, the undeveloped initiatives of good things to come ? Probably not. And yet, if we look back to almost any of the instances to which allusion has been made, we are rather tempted to wonder that the men of those times should not have anticipated the then bursting revolution, than are disposed to think the obscurity of their views inevitable.

We have, in fact, the highest authority for attributing to a strange infatuation, the slackness of the first disciples of Christ in discerning the signs of that time of renovation. It is indeed amazing that, after having received, in the most explicit terms, from their Master, a forewarning of his ignominious death, and a distinct promise of his speedy resurrection, they should at all have admitted (as it is plain they did) despondency in regard to his Messiahship, when by the exact accomplishment, in all its preliminary circumstances, of his prediction, they received a new and convincing proof of his divine prescience! It could not have been deemed a blameworthy presumption, had they (instructed as they were) exulted, though with tears, in anticipation of his triumph over death and hell; and had even made the rocky garden of the sepulchre to resound with songs. It was because they did not, in some such manner, wisely meet the occasion, that they were upbraided by their Lord, when again he appeared among them.

Or does it seem immensely to exceed the compass of the human mind, if we imagine that some at least of the believers of the first, second, and third centuries, even at the times of the extremest depression of the Christian name, had marked the evident symptoms of decrepitude in the false worship of the Roman world—had calculated on the natural consequence of the universal scepticism of the higher classes, and of the forced and hardly-sustained fanaticism of the mass of the people; and had seen that the struggle of polytheism was an expiring struggle; and must ere long fail before the Divine excellence and vigour of the doctrine of Christ? Because the immediate power of God was engaged in the spread and triumph of the Gospel, it is not less true that the efficacy from on high took its course in the channel of ordinary causes; nor that,

when the idols of the empire were "cast to the moles and to the bats," the event was, in an intelligible sense, the consequence of the precursive movements of the social system. And in these movements there might have been discerned—notwithstanding all contrary appearances, the dawn of the coming day.

The same, as every one must allow, is to be said of the restoration of Christianity, in modern times. An act of grace was it from above!—But not less the consequence of the anterior condition of Christendom. The closing years of the sixteenth century were, in all senses—"a day of preparation," from end to end of Europe; as well in the states that actually received the least as in those that received the greatest benefits from the Reformation. And there are, in fact, indications that the great revolution was dimly anticipated by some who lived not to see it achieved.

But in this, and other instances, it is to be observed that the actual preparatives were not so much to be found on the side or within the circle of truth and piety; as *abroad;* and on the surface, and beneath it, of that wide field of ruin that was to be the scene of renovation. And at this point it is that human sagacity goes astray. Our natural impulsion is, when happy changes are contemplated, to look for some promise of it to the quarters of light.—Not *there* are the true indications to be seen; but rather amid the thick gloom that is spread on all sides. It is a stirring upon the face of the dark waters that gives a prognostic of the breaking forth of light, and life, and order. Does not the Divine agent, as well in his acts of moral, as of material creation, though he may take up some inconsiderable existing element as the germ of what is to come, yet produce that which none can deem an expansion only of things that already were in being?

If *partial* or *local* improvements or reforms are in question, we may safely refer to the probable efficiency of existing and visible means.—For in the detail, God works by proximate causes.—Is it asked whether this or that particular circle is to be renovated? we look to the piety, and energy, and devout fervour of any who may be attempting to restore it. But on a larger scale of things, human agency disappears. The work, even though still effected by human instruments, belongs to another hand. The scheme is here too immense, and too intricate, to be devised and arranged by the understanding of man; and of such full-proportioned revolutions it shall always be said—"This is the Lord's doing;"—to man belongs only devout amazement.

Is the conversion of all nations in question?—We have then before us, *first* a practical, and then a *theoretic* subject of inquiry. And in reference to the former, no difficulty can be started. The duty of every Christian to promote piety within his family—and his neighbourhood, is unquestioned; and the most distant missionary enterprise (if prudently undertaken and conducted) is nothing else than an extension of that charity which we severally owe to our neighbour. A village of England, and a village of India, are the same in the sight of Christian zeal; if it comes within our power to convey to the inhabitants of either the knowledge of God and his Gospel.

It is manifest that no opinions we may entertain relative to the *second*, or *theoretic* question, concerning the conversion of the world, can (properly) interfere, in the smallest degree, with what we are called to do, personally, for the conversion of those (far or near) who may come within our circle of influence. Truly it is a pitiable imbecility of mind that leads some to withdraw from the field

of evangelical labour, because they surmise that the vast designs of Heaven are soon to be accomplished in a manner of its own choice. Shall not our children be taught to read, to praise, to pray until we know what is to be the fate of China and of India? But it is plain we might quite as reasonably put to a stop the routine of domestic instruction, on some such fantastic plea, as delay or cease to send Bibles and teachers to the children of China or of India, on the same ground. To do so is indeed most miserably to confound the pratical with the theroretic—the certain with the doubtful.

A consideration of the *theoretic question*, concerning the conversion of mankind, if rightly interpreted, and wisely used instead of tending to enhance or give colour to the indolent delusions that are now abroad, would at once greatly stimulate our zeal, and (which perhaps is still more to be desired) would simplify every motive;—free the heart from a too onerous solicitude;—renders us more tranquil amid seeming reverses; and especially lead us, with more reverence, to wait upon God for the fulfilment of his promises. In the preparation, and arrangement, and government of our evangelical istitutions, we have indeed too slenderly admitted the principles of human prudence; while in our expectations and surmisses of what is to be the issue of our endeaveur, we have too much gone on the ground of those secular principles which in word we renounce. This species of inconsistency besets the human mind at every turn.

It may be—who sball deny it?—that the zeal which now animates a thousand bosoms, and shall ere long animate the bosoms of a million;—that for evey ten, who now devote themselves to the service of the nations, there shall stand forth a hundred;—that printing, and transla-

tion, and teaching, shall fill, year after year, with rapid increase, a wider circle. It may be that the Christian of this age, or the sons of the present movers of missions, may become so devoted, and so wise, and so receive power from above, as that obstacles and oppossition shall give way, and the field—the field of the world, be vanquished by their hands. Such may perhaps be the order of the Divine compassion to mankind.—And assuredly we should act and pray in hope of it. This is *our* circle;—here is our part; and what ever may be the issue, faithful service, rendered on this ground, shall not lose its reward.

But it is not in *this* direction we should look, when we venture to inquire whether the present era may be thought "a day of preparation," precursive of the promised Sabbath of mankind. A theme like this is far greater than that it should connect itself with a catalogue of our societies, or with the sum total of subscriptions, or with the extent of our foreign labours:—or, in a word, with *any circumstances* that belong to the present condition, or efforts, of the Christian church. We are to look beyond the walls of the sanctuary.

II.

THE EXPECTATION OF CHRISTIANS.

"—— *And the Sabbath drew on.*"

SHALL we then look for a moment to the present religious condition of mankind? If it were lawful so far to extend an apostolic axiom as to apply it (beyond its proper scope) to the actual state of polytheistic, mahometan, and popish superstitions, in all quarters of the world, the brightest hopes which Christians of late have indulged, would be at once authenticated.—"That," says the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, "that which* has become antiquated and decrepit with age, is nigh to its final disappearance."

Nothing more remarkably distinguishes the religious state of mankind in our own times, as compared with any other eras, concerning which history enables us at all to form an opinion, than the air of DOTAGE which belongs, *without exception*, to every one of the leading surperstitions of the nations. There have been times when, if some were on their wane, others were in full vigour, or just starting forth from their cradle with a giant strength. If we track the course of time during the lapse of four-and-twenty centuries, we shall find this to have been the case in each period. In each there was, in some quarter within the circle of historic light, or its penumbra, one or more

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* Τὸ δὲ παλαιούμενον καὶ γηράσκον, ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ.

forms of religious error which very firmly grasped the minds of the nations that were its victims.

Although our knowledge of the human race is now incomparably more extensive, and accurate, than ever has been heretofore possessed, we can descry, in no direction, a young and hale and mantling religious delusion, such as threatens to become invasive; or which attracts the eyes of mankind by the signal proofs it is giving of its sway of the imagination and the turbulent passions of our nature. The contrary is the fact, and it is so in every zone. It is conspicuous that the demons are holding the reins of their power with a tremulous hand. The spirit of counsel and might has left them: the spirit of adventure and bold imposture has also departed. It seems as if there were neither courage nor concert in the halls of aerial government. Not only is every extant form of error *ancient*—most of them immemorially so; but every form is *imbecile*, as well as old. Or if we would seek a phrase that should at once describe the present condition of false religion, universally, we find it in the expression already quoted—The errors of mankind are now "antiquated, and in their dotage."—Dare we so far penetrate futurity as to add—"They are ready to vanish away?"

A theme so copious as this, and one in connexion with which a powerful impression on the mind may readily and unconsciously operate to mould facts to its own form, should perhaps hardly find a place at all, where a page only can be given to the subject. Nevertheless, its high significance at the present moment must excuse its introduction; and if the writer exaggerates, every reader, almost, has at hand the means of reducing his statement to the dimensions of truth.

But in taking this glance at the religion of the nations,

our special purpose must not be lost sight of.—We are not labouring to prove that the human race, generally, is in a condition which shall render our evangelic enterprises easy and rapidly successful. This is a matter we do not touch. —Nor are we about to say that some extraordinary revolution of the human mind, in matters of religion, is now clearly prognosticated by certain visible, symptoms of change. This might perhaps be affirmed, and made to appear probable ;—but it is not our purpose to affirm it. Our theme is simply—That if there be *independent reasons* for surmising that a great and happy change, to be brought about by unusual means, is not very distant—*then*, the actual and unparalleled condition of mankind, in matters of religion, is worthy of profound attention ; and may well be assumed as singularly corroborative of such an expectation. In a word ;—if it be conjectured that now, at length, the Sabbath made for man draws on, then does the aspect of the time we live in, well suit the description of " a day of preparation."

To the lowest stage of moral and civil existence in which man is any where found—that, for example, of the tribes of southern and central Africa—of the aborigines of Australia, and of the rude occupants of the coasts of the Frozen Sea ;—to the naked and wandering Troglodyte, and the Ichthyophagus, find him where we may, nothing properly *historical* belongs. Not only have such races no records, and no tradition (or none worthy of the name), but the whole of their condition is the product of immediate physical causes ;—not of moral and political causes, which, to be understood, must be followed up through the ascent of time. An inheritance in history is a rudiment of greatness, and of improvement too, of which such objects are destitute ;—and if we must speak of the *religion* of such

tribes, nothing is to be named but the mere germs of that instinct of Invisible Power which neither misery nor vice can wrench from the human breast. Nations of this lowest class are always, and *alike in every age*, prepared for any change of which their participation of moral faculties may render them susceptible. And the glory of the Gospel, in our day, is to have conferred, even upon *some such*, the dignity of virtue and immortal hope!

The heroic savage who stalks through the wildernes of America, and the pallid Mongul, and the feverish Tar tar, of central Asia, and the luxurious islander of th Southern and Pacific Ocean, are men upon whose visage in whose customs, and in whose belief we read the char acters of a distant age:—they all may boast *an ancestry* and they possess a memorial. They are not the mer progeny of the desert, born of oblivion, and destined t oblivion; but the descendants of MEN; and the races they belong to are the wrecks of primitive empires. A person of princely birth and education has wandered far from his patrimony, has fallen from his rank, has endured many degradations, has forgotten his rights: nevertheless there is an inalienable greatness about him; and even the trumpery of the ornaments he wears contains proof of his noble lineage. Like every thing else that distinguishes these fallen and impoverished families, their religion is a—RELIC. And it is a relic, faded in colours, and decayed. If the history of the subjugation of the empires of Mexico, and Peru, and if that of the Tartar conquests of the middle ages, and if the imperfect notices of the ancient Scythian nations, preserved by the Greek writers, may be taken as affording the means of a comparison between the present and the past religious condition of those classes of the human family of which we are speaking, it is quite mani-

fest that the dimness, and the incertitude, and the terrors of extreme age have come upon all their superstitions. The force of the fanaticism they once engendered is spent. The demon is less the object of terror, is less often and less largely propitiated with blood;—the priest is less a prince than he was, and more a mercenary. Yes, and symptoms have appeared, even in this class—of incredulity and reason. No phrase better describes these now fading errors, than that already quoted—they are "all superannuated and decaying with age."

By civilization and industry, but not in matters of religion, the Chinese is entitled to take rank above his nothern neighbour, cousin, and conqueror—the Mogul. In truth it must hardly be said that there is any thing of religion in China, if we deduct, on the one hand, what is purely an instrument of civil polity—a pomp of government; and on the other, what is mere domestic usage, or immemorial *decoration* of the home economy. Ages have passed away since mind, or feeling, or passion, animated the religion of China. The religion of China is now a thing, not only as absurdly gay, but as dead at heart, as an Egyptian mummy:—it is fit only to rest where it has lain two thousand years:—touch it—shake it—it crumbles to dust. Let but the civil institutions of China be broken up, and we might look about in vain for its religion.

But may not at least the dark and gorgeous superstitions of India boast of undiminished strength, as well as of venerable age? Antiquated as they are, can we affirm that they totter? Less so, it may be granted, than any other forms of false religion upon earth.—They were born for longevity; they are the very beings of the climate; almost as proper to it as its prodigious and venomous reptiles. But can it be said of these illusions, firm as they still seem,

that they have not been placed in jeopardy during the last fifty years, and especially of late? Is there not even now, in the fanaticism of India, more of *usage* than of *passion?* And we well know that the very crisis of a *profound* religion system, such as Hindooism—such as Romanism, comes on, when the enormities which once were cruel and sincere, begin to be simply loathsome and *farcical.* Besides; does not the strength of the religion of India consist in the credit of the Braminical order? The beard of the Bramin is the secret of its power; but, like the locks of Samson, may it not readily be lost? The credit of the Bramin rests upon the unnatural partition of the people by *caste*: and this partition is hastening to decay.

If the question related to the probable facility with which the Gospel, *in our hands*, would prevail over the delusions of the Hindoo, it might seem one of very difficult solution. But we ask no more than this—Whether the superstitions of India, and of the adjacent countries, do not (even admitting their actual hold of the people) partake of that character of SUPERANNUATION which now so remarkably belongs to every other impiety and error in the world? We scruple not to assume the affirmative.

Those fanciful analogies which it has become the fashion, abroad, to employ for the illustration of the history of nations (much to the hurt of all sound principles) are to be carefully avoided. Or at least we should not build *an argument* upon any such uncertain ground. This caution premised, it must be confessed that, in contemplating as a whole the history of the two magnific superstitions which now sway all the nations of the middle stage of civilization—embracing the south of Europe, the south of Asia, the nothern regions of Africa, and South America, it is difficult (in regard to both of them alike) to exclude

from the mind the resemblance which their history bears to the course of human life, from the vigour of youth to the decripitude of age. Is it not as if the many nations we have mentioned, were now in tutelage, under the hand of a venerable pair—male and female, both equally stricken in years; and both equally petulant, jealous, rigid, and effete; and very likely to go to their sepulchres in company?

The grave and *masculine* superstition of the Asiatic nations, which employed the hot blood of its youth in conquering all the fairest regions of the earth, spent its long and bright manhood in the calm and worthy occupations of government and intelligence. During four centuries, the successors of Mahomet were the only *men* the human race could at all boast of. In the later season of its maturity, and through a long course of time, the steadiness, the gravity, and their immoveable rigour, which often mark the temper of man from the moment when his activity declines, and until infirmity is confessed, belonged to Islamism, both western and eastern. And now, is it necessary to prove that every symptom characteristic of the last stage of human life, attaches to it? Mahometan *empire* is decrepit; Mahometan *faith* is decrepit: and both are so by confession of the parties. In matter both civil and religious, those days are come upon this superstition in which —"The *sun*, and the *moon*, and the stars, are darkened;" nor do "the clouds (of refreshment) return after the rain.— And the keepers of the house tremble; and the strong bow themselves; and the grinders (the powers of mechanic art and trade) cease, because they are few. And they that look out at the windows (the learned class) are darkened. And the doors are shut in the streets (by jealousy and depopulation) and the weakfulness of conscious danger is

upon it; and the daughters of music (revelry) are brought low; and fears are in the way; and desire faileth."

Is it indeed a gratuitous assumption, advanced only to give completeness to an argument, when we say—That the religion of the Prophet is now in its stage of extreme decrepitude?

But in what terms are we fairly to describe the present health and powers of the haggard Superstition of the West?—If the strength of immortality indeed be in her, to what region has the vital energy retired?—is it kindling about the heart? Is it within and around the pestilential levels of the Tiber, that we are to find the force, the concentration, the fervour, that should belong to the centre of a living body? Or may we choose among the extremities? Is the Catholic faith otherwise than decrepit, as it exists in the midst of the sceptical intelligence of the north of Italy; or by the side of the mystical unbelief of Germany? Or shall we prefer the mockery of France, to the debauchery of Spain, and of Portugal, when we are thus in search of the power and promise of popery? But perhaps Ireland is the asylum of the true and indestructible religion! Those who will console themselves with such a supposition, shall not be disturbed in their dreams; and yet will we not hold our conclusion in suspense—That Popery, like Mahometanism, and every other superstition of mankind, is in its wane.—Upon the Church of Rome, most conspicuously, have come the many loathsome infirmities that usually attend the close of *a dissolute life*. She who once lived deliciously, and courted kings to her couch is now spurned, and mocked, and hated, in her wrinkles. Every ear into which she would whisper an obsequious petition, is averted from the steam of her corrupted breath!

The Greek church should not be quite omitted; but if

we affirmed that *second* childhood had come upon it, we should plainly err; for *childishness* has been its character, even from its youth up. The offspring of a decrepit power, it has known nothing, in its long life of fourteen centuries —but inanity:—has cared for nothing but toys!

The Protestant communities of nothern Europe are not to be spoken of summarily, or in mass. Let them stand aside from our survey. The course of affairs may probably, at no distant time, decide upon their respective merits, and shew which of them has lost, and which retains, the Spirit of Life.

Three very distinct inferences might be drawn from the remarkable fact (which will hardly be disputed) of the now antiquated and infirm state of every existing superstition. The first of these might be termed the Atheistic inference; the second, the Evangelic; and the third, the Prophetic.

There are those who, in looking abroad upon mankind at the present moment, and in gathering up the general result of all the facts to which, hastily, we have alluded, would indulge the belief that the instinct of religion in the human mind is slowly wearing out;—that the habitude of worship is being obliterated; and that an age or more to come shall see nation after nation renouncing both the forms and the substance of its regard to invisible power. Against such an inference there lies the unbroken evidence of experience in all ages, and all places:—not to say, the invincible proof of Christianity.

The second, or evangelic inference, from the same facts, must be granted to be valid by every Christian; as well as, in the highest degree, momentous. Although it will by no means follow (facts prove the contrary) that because the grasp of fanaticism is becoming less firm upon the human heart than heretofore, therefore men will now readily

admit the better faith we offer them ; nevertheless it is unquestionably an enterprise of more promise, to assail the nations in their hour of faintness and *solution*, than at a time when magnificent and seductive systems of worship were at their height of energy and splendour. If probabilities drawn from the state of the human mind are at all to be looked to, should we not rather, for example, carry a mission into the heart of Persia or Turkey *now*, than in the age of Almamon, or Almansor? Or should we not rather (personal peril not considered) disseminate the word of life in the Spanish republics of America in our own times, than in the times of the zealous Torquemada?

In *this* sense, the present era may justly be deemed the day of hope for the Gospel. No such singular conjuncture of symptoms, throughout the world, has ever before invited the activity and zeal of Christians. And if the pressure of responsibility is at all times great upon them, in this behalf it has acquired now a treble weight: inasmuch as it seems as if the antagonist powers were fast drawing off from the field. Looking out to the long and many-coloured array of ghostly domination, as it stretches its lines across plains and hills, we discern movement;—but it is the stir of retreat. Encampments are breaking up; barriers are trampled upon; standards are furled; the clarion of dismay is sounded.—This—this then is the hour for the hosts of the Lord to snatch their weapons, and be up!

Ours then is a "day of preparation" in the sense of missionary enterprise; and on *this* ground, notwithstanding all discouragements, it may be hoped, not feebly, that "the Sabbath draweth on."

But there is yet an inference distinct from the one we have named, which fairly may be drawn from the present religious condition of mankind. We term it a *prophetic* inference; because its validity rests altogether upon the

ground of those predictions—scattered through the Inspired Volume, which declare—that true religion shall at length be universal. This only being assumed, we may attribute as much, or as little value, as we think fit, to those special interpretations which bring the lines of prophecy to converge upon the present age. All such disputable interpretations apart, it is impossible to compare the *general sense* of prophetic Scripture, with the movement—the *laxation* of the human mind, in all countries, without admitting a sentiment of awe and expectation. And this sentiment is rendered the more intense by the fact, that the decrepitude of superstition has been rapidly accelerated of late;—the powers of its life have sunk apace; and mortal symptoms have appeared in quick succession.

No sound mind would draw, from views like these, *definite surmises*, which must almost certainly prove fallacious. But it does not follow that we should not contemplate *at large*, that which we may not scrutinize *in detail*. The point of wisdom is to advance as far as it may; and there to stop.

And when sober conjecture has reached its limit, let us turn the eye upon the Christian body, and, with a much enhanced solicitude, examine the soundness of its principles, its temper, tendency, knowledge:—in a word, its state of preparation for that better day—a day of WORSHIP and of REST, which many reasons, and many appearances, concur to indicate as at hand.

Least of all should any (calling themselves Christians) now feel, and speak, and act, as if they abhorred advancement; or as if decay and slumber were far less dreaded by them, than change, even of the happy sort.*

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* Οὕτω καὶ ἡ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας γαλήνη, δεξαμένη φθόγους ἀνθρώπους, ζάλης καὶ ναυαγίων πληροῦται πολλῶν.

It were as rational to suppose that the sun, and every planet of our system, might undergo a vast change of form and constitution, yet leaving the earth unaffected and unaltered; as it is to believe that a general and simultaneous revolution in the religious state of all nations could take place, which should produce no reflected and sympathetic influence upon existing Christian communities.

Let the fond admirer of his own Church, whatever may be its pretensions, assure himself, that the conversion of Asia, and Africa, and Europe and America, will so raise the temperature—spiritual and moral, of the world's atmosphere, as must dissolve, to its very elements, every community now calling itself a Church. All principles shall then invest themselves in new power, all notions of good and evil be recast, all forms and constitutions be new modelled. We shall indeed believe the same thing as now; but in another manner: we shall practise the same virtues, but at a different rate, with firmer motives, and under the guidance of an extended exposition of every precept.

Instead therefore of cherishing a blind attachment to phrases, modes, usages, opinions, which are separable from the substance of religion, wise and docile spirits, though they may not hope fully to anticipate, in imagination, the changes that are to be effected, will at least preserve with care a state of feeling, such as shall prove the best preparative for joining in with whatever may attend the expected "times of refreshment."

III.

THE COURAGE PECULIAR TO TIMES AND PLACES.

"*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.*"

By the believers of the first age it was understood that the Gospel should, in the end, prevail over all opposition; and that all nations should at length come and do homage to Christ. And yet there were moments when the indulgence of such a hope must have been difficult; and when any thing must have seemed probable rather than the occurrence of those events which were actually at the door. Justin Martyr, perhaps, would have been scarcely less astounded than Antoninus, if both had together been told that two centuries only would see the religion of Galilee—the religion of Roman Emperors, and of the Roman World!

And let it be imagined that Justin, and the faithful of his time, could have seen in vision (and in its *fair colours*) the present firm establishment of the faith of Christ; and could have known that it should become the profession of all highly-civilized nations, and be most honoured in that country which was to take the lead in the world, by extent of power, by wealth, by energy, liberty, and intelligence. In the midst of such a revelation of the bright futurity, must not the martyr have deemed it a whisper from the False Spirit, had it been added, that, even in the age and in the country of the greatest triumph of the Gospel, there should be as much room as at first, for the constancy of its

champions, in maintaining their profession; and that they, like Paul, when he thought of opening his ministry at Rome, should often have need to animate their confidence by the declaration—"We are not ashamed of the religion of Christ?" Christianity has very much ground to pass over, and to conquer, before Christians may lay aside their courage. And if what is most important in their belief is to be spoken of, there is little less necessity for such firmness of purpose now, than in any age that can be named.

The false shame or timidity which may embarrass Christians when called upon to profess the prime parts of their belief, will, it is evident, attach in very different degrees to different persons; or to the same persons under different circumstances, and in different places. It was so among the apostles.—If those passages of the canonical epistles are compared, wherein the writers profess the confidence they felt in the goodness of their cause, no inequality whatever can be detected in the degree of their persuasion, severally, of the divine mission of their Master. This is only what might be expected from those who witnessed indubitable proof daily of his power and glory. Nevertheless, though the tone of confidence be equable and undistinguishable (proceed whence it may) it has a specific value in some instances, which does not belong to it in others. And the reason of the difference is obvious:—

As for example.—The disciple whom "Jesus loved" (and we cannot doubt on account of a kindred simplicity, purity, and elevation of temper) occupied a sphere of meditative abstraction which raised him above that level where faith is most assaulted:—in an emphatic sense, he lived on high, and looked upon the things of earth, as angels may look upon them. It is altogether in harmony with this

order of feeling that we hear him calmly (and justly) and like a messenger from heaven, challenging all truth for the church; and assigning all error to the world.—"We know that we are of God."

The confidence of Peter is as entire as that of John; but yet of a somewhat different character. His native irresolution had merged in stronger motives: yet his sympathy with doubt or diffidence remained; and his closer contact with the common world led him to adapt himself more to the modes of thinking of mankind at large. To the Jewish people, and to their Rulers, he addresses reasons specifically proper to the persons with whom he had to do; and the stripes he received from the Sanhedrim were the award of the pointed and unanswerable argument he had left to rankle in the consciences of his judges. This sort of conviction, founded on the common and intelligible ground of external evidence, shews itself even when he writes to the faithful:—"We have not followed cunningly devised fables."—And yet there is a peculiar species of constancy of mind, for which we must look to another of the apostles.

Who shall detect, either in the public speeches, or private correspondence, of Paul, any indication of secret misgiving? Nothing more distinguishes his manner, whether in courts of justice, or among his friends, than the highest degree of confidence and courage. It is one and the same tone of decision, however modified by the specific occasion, which we hear from him—at the tribunal of Roman governors—in the circle of Jewish Rabbis—in the heart of a frantic rabble, or among Stoics and Epicureans. It is one and the same style of absolute conviction, which belongs to all the epistles, whether addressed to churches that fondly bowed to his authority; or to those that factiously opposed

it;—to his most intimate associates, or to the Christian body at large. He is the same man, in this respect, whether at large or in bonds; whether at the commencement of his apostolic course, or expecting every day to seal it with his blood. "Would to God that all who hear me this day were altogether such as I am!"—"I speak the words of truth and soberness."—"I know in whom I have believed." "I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the Lord Jesus."—"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life."—"We are always confident, and willing to be absent from the body, that we may be present with the Lord."

And if always fully assured of the certainty of the message which he carried to the nations, no peculiarity of circumstances could make him diffident in proclaiming the most obnoxious parts of it. To some such circumstances Paul was alive far more sensibly than Peter, James, or John could be.—The Jewish prejudice against a humiliated and suffering Saviour, and a spiritual kingdom, having been at length dispelled from the minds of the first companions of Christ, nothing remained in their native modes of thinking, which could give *peculiar* force to the incredulity either of their compatriots, or of the Gentile world. When engaged in controversy with the former, the argument was a *serious* one, on both sides; and it was an argument on the ground of principles common to both parties—namely, the divine authority of the existing Scriptures. They urged the testimony of the prophets, upon those who reverenced the prophets.—The Jew, how corrupt soever in life or doctrine, was still a *religionist*;—he understood the *terms* of the Christian argument, was familiar with its modes of reasoning, and especially he held no philosophical notion which repudiated the supposition of a miraculous attestation of religious doctrines. This is a sort of contest which does

not in the most severe degree try the constancy of the mind. —Let but our antagonist be *serious as ourselves*, and we need not care, though he be infuriate.

And in another manner, even by their simplicity and their want of erudition, the men of Galilee were well-armed to encounter whatever they might meet with abroad, in the polytheistic world. Beside their miraculous powers, and the Divine teaching they enjoyed, they carried forth the great truths of the Natural and Moral attributes of God, and the hope of immortality, and the maxims of virtue, among nations whose capital errors on all these points placed all—learned or barbarous, on one and the same level in their view. To them the Athenian was as the Scythian—a worshipper "of stocks."—Was the difference between one idol and another, in its fashion, a matter of any moment?—Not now to speak specifically of the Christian teachers—the Jew of that age, by his conscious possession of the most important truths, and by his want of refinement, and taste, and philosophic sophistication, stood in the most favourable position for looking down with *just* and undistinguishing contempt upon all forms of idolatry.—It is well sometimes to be insensible of diversities which, if discerned, are more likely to confuse our perceptions of some essential difference, than to aid our decision. To the devout Jew, one sculptured folly was like another—neither more nor less offensive, on account of its workmanship. What was the chisel of Phidias, what the pencil of Apelles, to the men who had been taught to adore the Living and True God? Apollo was as Dagon;—the temples of Greece, as the pagodas of India.

We must not deny that the want of knowledge is a disparagement, lest we seem to take part with the despotic advocates of ignorance. Nevertheless it must be admitted

that on *special occasions*, when the most momentous truths have to be manfully asserted in opposition to splendid and erudite errors, there may be an advantage in that sort of rude or blunt force which deprives specious sophistry of all its power over the imagination. Plain and *insensitive* vigour of mind may perhaps trample heedlessly on some things which deserved a measure of respect; but it takes the right course—reaches an impregnable position, and leaves a host of frivolous sophisms in the rear—powerless, though unrefuted. Thus it was, in a still stronger sense, with the men of Galilee; for beside their national advantage, as Jews, and the unblemished simplicity of their understanding, they knew and felt, far better than did the doctors of the Sanhedrim, the infinite disparity of true and false religion. On the banks of the Tiber, or of the Tigris, of the Indus, or the Nile—the Gospel of Christ was always their glory; and they saw nothing in the world which, by comparison, could for a moment make them ashamed of it.

There was somewhat more implied when Paul, meditating a journey to Rome, declared that "he was not ashamed" of the same doctrine. His possession of miraculous powers did not nullify the natural influence of his original habits of thinking, or of his education. The human mind is so constituted as to admit freely the play of independent and conflicting motives, even if it obeys always the one motive that is paramount. And high culture much increases the susceptibility of the mind towards diverse or contradictory impulses; so that while the uninstructed, when borne onward by a ruling principle, forget all secondary considerations; the more intelligent, though not less steady and consistent *in action* (perhaps more so,) yet continue to hold converse with reasons they have repudiated; and to traverse again and again the ground of their firmest

convictions.—the more mind—the more compass of motive.

And can we read the speeches recorded by Luke, or the fourteen epistles of our canon, and doubt whether Paul were open to the influence of a world of things of which his colleagues were quite insensible? His general acquaintance with human affairs, his familiarity with Greek literature and philosophy, his military habits, his knowledge of the arts of sculpture and painting; beside his native sensibility, and prompt discernment of the nicer proprieties of time, and place, and occasion, would altogether leave him unconscious of hardly any of the emotions that distinguish highly cultivated minds—probably of none.

A point of comparison, on this ground, between Paul and some of his countrymen, deserves to be noted. It is well known that not a few of the Hebrew nation, from the age of the Macedonian conquests, and during the course of the four following centuries, ambitiously addicted themselves to Grecian literature; and in this ambiguous course advanced as far towards a treasonable admiration of polytheistic philosophy, poetry, and art, as could well consist with their professed attachment to the national faith. Some went further than this limit. Scattered indications of the incongruous mixtures of opinions which thence resulted, are to be found—in some allusions of the New Testament—in the apocryphal books, and in the Rabbinical commentaries. But evidence to the same purport, and more at large, is presented in the writings of the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, and of the Jewish courtier of Jerusalem.—Philo and Josephus show us, in their several modes, what a Jew became when he would be more than a Jew;—or in a word, what was the ἀκροβυστία of the Hellenists.

But it is observable in all these instances, whether full

or scanty, that the superinduction of Grecian modes of thinking upon the Hebrew mind was, to the whole extent of it, a corruption of faith—an abandonment, or an abatement of the proper Jewish spirit;—Moses was dishonoured, so far as Plato was admired. Philosophy held a place furtively in the mind of the Rabbi, and did him no service. In fact, no schooling could make the Jew a Greek, either as sage, rhetorician, or man of taste; or only so far as it made him, a secret unbeliever, or an apostate. Philo is but an *Alexandrian* Rabbi, and a *barbarian* philosopher. —Josephus, little better than a renegade.

Paul of Tarsus affords an instance of another sort. He was as well read as Philo; almost as much conversant with active life as Josephus;—he was a reader of the Greek drama, and a great master of that *mental management* which then was to be learned only within the circle of Grecian dialectics and rhetoric. Nevertheless he remains most completely national in his mode of thinking, and his phraseology: it was at the feet of Gamaliel that he sat, though he learned lessons elsewhere.—There is no alien spirit—no shrinking from Moses, no blending of things incompatible, no affectation of doctrines more enlarged and liberal, or more refined, than were taught by the prophets, in the writings of Paul.—He is not now the Jew, now the Christian, now the sophist; but always both Jew and Christian; and as fully so as Peter, or as James.

Besides possessing more native ingenuousness and vigour of mind than those of his countrymen to whom we have just referred, so that he was free from the affectation and obsequiousness that belong to them, St. Paul grasped, in a much firmer manner than they, the vital principles which were the glory of the Jewish people. Even as a Jew, and still more as a Christian, he was better qualified than they

to estimate justly the intrinsic value of Grecian philosophy and refinement. He knew how to strike the balance of merit between Plato, or Pindar, or Memander, and David or Isaiah. He neither repudiated the Grecian literature with a rude fanatical arrogance, because it was at fault in matters of religion; nor laboured to deck himself in its flowers, at the cost of consistency: but while he adhered, in spirit and letter—in form and substance, to that fashion of thought and language which the divine oracles had set, did not scruple to avail himself of whatever aid might fairly be drawn from a foreign source.

Paul had seen nothing among the Greeks which compelled him to be ashamed of the prophets: and it may even be imagined that, had he not embraced Christianity, his zeal and intelligence, and his singular power of adapting himself to the notions and tastes of men of all classes, might have led him to plead the cause of his national literature with the Greeks. His eloquence, his ingenuity, and the intrinsic soundness of his argument, might (it is not improbable) have secured to him some signal success in such an attempt; or at least a blaze of reputation.

And the attempt would have been a noble one; but the Lord had "set him apart" to a task far more noble, far more perilous, and far more mortifying.—To preach "repentance and forgiveness of sin" through faith in the propitiatory death of Jesus; and to preach this doctrine in the Grecian cities, and among the schools of learning, this was the part assigned to Paul. And in discharging it, he must have felt, in all its force, the contempt that covered him as a promulgator of such a dogma;—he felt this obloquy as his colleagues could not. Not only in the single instance recorded by his biographer, but no doubt often in his circuit through Greece, and its colonies, he stood surrounded by

the sarcastic curiosity of Stoics, Epicureans, and Academicians. He knew, on such occasions, in what spirit he was listened to, as a busy and babbling zealot of the Jewish superstition. He could penetrate—nay, he could feel a sympathy with the erudite scorn of his auditors: he understood the sentiment with which men of high culture give ear, for a moment, to a tale of wonder which they have condemned as absurd, before it is commenced. In the oblique glance of the half-closed eye, in the sneer that played on the lip, he read the mind and the malice of every sophist. He could mentally change positions with his auditors, and at the moment while uttering the "strange things" of the Gospel, could feel as they felt—the harsh and abhorrent character, both of the principles, and of the facts, which he had to announce—Jesus, the Galilean teacher—crucified—raised to life—constituted Lord and Judge of men, and now giving repentance for remission of sins. This was his burden, at Antioch, at Ephesus, at Nicopolis, at Corinth, and at Athens!

And yet there awaited him, what perhaps must be deemed even a still more severe trial of his constancy: for he bore a commission to preach the Gospel—at "Rome also." A man of cultured mind, whatever special disadvantage he may happen to labour under, nevertheless feels that, among men of his own order, he can occupy a common ground, on which to gain the respect, if not the assent, of his hearers. On that ground he may be sure to put flippant scorn to the blush. There is a sympathy among men addicted to intellectual pursuits, of which any one who is truly entitled to do so, may powerfully avail himself. But no such advantage can be looked for within the circle where wealth and sumptuous splendour are in far higher esteem than learning or philosophy; and where

the arrogance of military and civil rule crush every pretension that might dispute honour with their own. The proud and luxurious metropolis of universal empire was the place where, most of all, a man of intelligence would feel his immense disadvantage, in having to broach a doctrine such as Christianity must have seemed at Rome—in the age of Nero.

And yet not at Rome, any more than at Athens, was Paul ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. On the contrary, he "spoke the word with all boldness," even "in the palace:" and the fruits of his constancy were shown to the world in that black night, when the imperial gardens blazed with the torments of a crowd of the adherents of the Gospel:—the first-fruits of martyrdom, offered to the gods by a fit minister of such divinities; and an earnest of the unsparing oblations with which Rome—pagan and popish, should, through a long course of ages, propitiate infernal powers!

But what relation does this comparison between the constancy of Paul and that of his colleagues bear to the position, or the conduct of Christians in our own age and country?—We think one that is significant, and in some sense exact.

At certain eras the purity and lustre of the evangelic doctrine—the glorious truth of remission of sins through faith in Christ, has been in the hands, almost exclusively, of men of the simplest order; of men who, in mental qualities, and in want of culture, and in rude ingenuousness of Spirit, might not improperly be deemed the very successors and representatives of the Galilean teachers. To *such* the world was the World—whether erudite or barbarous; and the full confidence they felt in the goodness and divine reality of their cause, was never troubled by a misgiving

recollection, that all the intelligence, and refinement, and knowledge of mankind, stood in array against them. Such men, though they reached their conclusion as if by a leap over the ground, nevertheless came to a *just conclusion*, That, the wisdom of the world, when opposed to the doctrine of Christ, is essential folly. They were not ashamed of this doctrine therefore, even when philosophy, and elegance, and titles and honours, were combined against it.

Although there may be found among us now (in corners) persons of this same class (ingenuous, illiterate, and fervent) whose courage in matters of religion costs them no extraordinary effort; the great body of Christians, in our age and country, would be very improperly described in any such terms; for they have neither the same merits, nor the same defects. The religious classes have admitted and imbibed just that degree of general intelligence, which, by laying them open to all influences, puts to the severest proof the integrity and simplicity of their spirit, as messengers of the mercy of God to mankind. We say—just that degree of intelligence. For it must not be affirmed (after a very few instances are excepted) that the accomplishments and mental power of the religious body, or of its leaders, are so fairly on a par with the learning and science of the times, as to leave no room for the consciousness of inferiority.

It is not with us now, as it was in the age of the Reformation, when the champions of the Gospel were men of gigantic understanding, and of unrivalled attainments; men who had no competitors or rivals to fear, in any walk of learning; men who ruled the philosophy, as well as the religion, of their times. Nor is it as it was in the age of Jerom, and Augustine, and Ambrose, and Gregory, and

Chrysostom, when the Church moved foremost on all grounds of honour and merit; and when pagan philosophy had scarcely a laurel left on its brow.

We stand midway between the advantageous post of rude ingenuous fervour, and that of zeal or unrivalled eminence in matters of science and learning. But a *middle position* is one of jeopardy, incertitude, timidity. By all the amount of our actual intelligence, we *feel* the offence of the Cross; and yet our intelligence reaches not the point which should set us free from anxiety in maintaining our profession.

IV.

LAXITY AND DECISION.

"That I may make manifest the Ministry of Christ, as I ought to speak."

Nothing would be more calumnious than to say that the principal articles of Christian belief are not now (and in very many quarters) clearly, ably, and faithfully announced. There is no room for any such allegation or complaint. On the contrary, in a multitude of instances, how much soever we may be perplexed by the paucity of the fruits, we should be quite unable to assign any considerable defect as the probable cause of the want of greater success.

This being fully granted, there should be noted (and the juniors of a clerical order should especially observe it) a cause of abatement which, in a greater or less degree, very sensibly produces its effect within the circle of what is termed *evangelical ministrations*. It is the reflected influence of that middle rate of intelligence to which allusion has already been made.—The Preacher of our day has advanced several steps beyond the position of his predecessor; and his hearers have advanced also. They laudably wish for *diversified* instructions; and he naturally desires to meet and satisfy this wish.—While therefore he adheres with care to the accredited system of Christian truth; and always speaks of the chief points of divinity *as chief* and of the subordinate as subordinate, and is "in doctrine *uncorrupt*;—while all this may be said, and every ground of just exception seems to be excluded, the actual result—

shall we say the gross amount of his public labours, gives the proportion of not more than one to ten, to the prime truth of the Scriptures. The glory of Christ, as Saviour of men, which should be always as the sun in the heavens, shines only with an astral lustre ;—or as one light among others. This is a natural, though indirect, consequence of the intellectual progress which the religious community has made.

The mode of preaching that has been affectedly termed —the intellectual, will hardly be made to consist with a bold, simple, and cordial proclamation of the message of mercy. Its *intention* is not the same ; its means are not the same : and the fruit of it will be—obtuse indifference in relation to the most affecting objects of Christian faith. The tendency, at the present moment, towards intelligent frigidity is a grave matter, and one especially which should lead to a consideration of our several systems of clerical initiation. The cause of so great a practical error should be known, if it be true, that numbers of those who come forth upon the church as candidates for the Christian ministry, are fraught with all qualifications, and all acquirements—rather than fervour and simplicity in proclaiming the glad tidings of life.

There should here be memtioned an unhappy consequence that has flowed from the natural but very ill-judged ambition of young and aspiring preachers to follow the train of thought, and to imitate the style, of certain eminent religious writers. Now besides that *imitation* is a disparagement, and a degradation, in a christian minister, especially if it springs from a motive of vanity : is it not evident that the pulpit and the press ought to fill different spheres ? The writer forfeits his proper advantage if he does nothing more than—preach in print: and the preacher

forgets all that is serious and momentous in his office, when he utters from the pulpit, that which, to produce its due effect, must be spread before the eye, and which therefore, when listened to, will not move the conscience. A religious writer may very properly (nay he ought to do so) select subjects, and pursue a line of thought, and employ a style, all of which are unsuited to the ears of a promiscuous assembly. Well would it be if, on the one hand, our writers would always set themselves a task more specific, and more *difficult* too, than that of printing pulpit exercises; and on the other, if our preachers would cherish an ambition far more becoming to them, and more truly noble, than that of being esteemed masters of an elaborate style.

Do we then make void the utility of mental acquirements and intellectual power in the preacher of the Gospel?—Nay rather, we establish the necessity of both.—The advancement of the people generally, in knowledge, demands that their teachers should move on at least at an equal rate. But danger—danger to the simplicity of the spirit, springs from that meagerness of attainment, and that slenderness in the mode of thinking, which lead the mind to employ itself on secondary matters, and which especially compel it to spread out scanty materials over as broad a surface as possible. There is a natural process in the world of mind of which men, whose engagements are intellectual, should always be aware. The *initial part* of this process consists in the expansion—we might say, the scattering of the faculties over a wide field, while new ideas from a thousand sources are daily coming in. The *after-part*, which is properly the maturing of the mind is, in its method, the reverse of the first:—it is the process of concentration, of condensation:—it is the bringing of all

materials, and of all faculties, to a point, upon that one principal matter which has been already chosen as the worthy object of the man's most energetic devotion. In this finishing of a man for his work, it may seem as if the mental dimensions he had just reached were contracting; as if he were drawing back from the ground he had occupied; as if he were resigning what yesterday he eagerly grasped. But it is not so. The spirit is only gathering itself up to act.

Now if this process be arrested just at the juncture of the initial and the conclusive part, the consequence is a loss of the special advantage of rude and simple fervour, and native force, without the compensation which more progress would have secured. If the young preacher steps into the pulpit at the very moment when all the blooming petals of the mind have spread themselves out to the utmost, to greet light and air, and if the scorching beams of public life wither the blossom, the germ falls to the ground.

No man of mature understanding, who has seriously fixed himself in the great purpose of devoting all the force he possesses to the work of the Gospel, will think that any kind of knowledge he may have acquired, or any species of mental labour to which he may have become familiar, is solutely unavailable for promoting his design. There is nothing extrinsic or foreign in literature, or science, there is nothing difficult or profound in the region of abstruse philosophy, there is no habit of meditation or of abstraction, which he will look upon as worthless, in relation to the arduous and all-comprehensive work of leading the spirits of men into the path of truth. But then there are none of these acquirements, none of these practised faculties, that he will for a moment regard in any other light,

than as a means to the end which his soul has embraced. To give honour to the Saviour of the world, and to lead to the arms of Mercy the lost, is the work he has put his hand to; and he can please himself in nothing, but success in this great endeavour.

We are not then afraid lest the Gospel should be spoiled by learning and intelligence; but we desire that both should be concentrated upon, and devoted to the one worthy enterprise which the Christian Ministry has in veiw.

It may seem to some persons that, if a question is entertained relative to the supposed abatement, at the present moment, of the evangelic function, a prominent place ought to be given to the influence—open or concealed, of the heresy which directly oppugns the doctrines of the Gospel. This would have been proper forty years ago: but not now. There was indeed a time (not yet forgotten) of *faintness* in the evangelical bodies:—there was a time when a heavy mist, charged with death, hung over many quarters of the Christian world; when not a few whose lips still uttered "right things," were shaken in soul; or had quite lost all inward sense and feeling of the truth.

But this season has passed away:—the victims of the infection have either fallen from their places, or been restored to life. And if it were asked how far the Socinian error *now* checks the promulgation and progress of the Gospel, it would be impossible to make so small a matter palpable in our reply. To affirm that the great principles of Religion are at present endangered by the feeble and expiring remains of Socinianism, were much the same as to say that the throne and constitution of Britian are in jeopardy by the lurking attachment of the people to the house of Stuart! Socinianism no more makes us afraid for our religion, than Jacobinism does for our liberties.

The contrary is the fact.—we are strengthened by the puny heresy that yet gasps, here and there, about us.—The modern history—the fate, and the present actual condition of the doctrine, absurdly called Unitarianism, is quite enough to convince any man of sense that the sceptical argument is a mere sophism, even if he knew nothing of the merits of the question. And this edifying history, and spectacle, does in fact produce a proper effect upon the minds of men, and does actually seal the theological argument, as it ought. Is Unitarianism Christianity?—Read the story of its rise in modern times, of its progress, and decay, and look at the meager phantom as now it haunts the dry places it has retired to!—is this pitiful shadow Christianity?

It might be well if certain valiant persons among us could find more profitable employment than that of hunting a spectre!

Our dangers are of another sort. The long-continued tranquility which notwithstanding the rage of war and anarchy around us, the British Islands have enjoyed; and the exemption of all parties from the fact or the fear of persecution, and the peculiar temper also, which belongs to highly-stimulated commercial habits, have together produced upon our Christian character a settled indisposition to give way to deep or powerful emotions of any kind.—We are indeed fond of excitement; but in the same degree are afraid of agitation. The strong workings of the prime emotions of the soul we greatly dread. If we feel more than may just serve to give animation to a public assembly, we know not whither we shall be carried. If we were to allow ourselves to fall back upon serious convictions, we might be led so to act and speak as would break in upon the conventional serenity of the circle in which we move.

The surface of the waters may be rippled; but it must not be tossed with winds and waves!

A different order of things around us would presently bring into play the powerful and irresistible elements of the moral life. Events may be imagined which would mar our levity—disturb our complacency, and break up the polished surface which reflects our ease. Events may easily be thought of which would lead us home to the first principles of the Gospel, and quite sicken our taste of every thing but those principles. Private troubles and common griefs, how heavy soever, by no means affect us in the same way, or to the same extent, as public calamities. The imagination is much concerned in the effect which the idea of danger or suffering produces on the mind; and so it is that, although the cloud that rests over our single habitation may actually be more dense than the gloom which covers all the skies (hiding hope and peace from nations) yet it is this general gloom, more than the partial storm, that avails to dispel the frivolity of the human spirit, and teaches a solemn fear of the Divine displeasure. And it is under such an impression that the Gospel will assume its just dimensions in our sight. How soon may the glad tidings of mercy be listened to with a new and genuine joy, amid the loud peals of some wide-spreading judgment!

For the possible occurrence of such a season of profound and powerful emotions, all Christians should prepare themselves. Apart from any actual indications of its approach (and which the forbearance of God may yet turn aside) it would not seem highly improbable, if we look to what has been the ordinary series of events in the history of Christian nations, that the inert elements of piety among us are ere long to be set at work in a more powerful man-

ner than heretofore, not merely by an extraordinary effusion of the Spirit of Grace, but by the operation of unusual external causes. If there be a disposition in some minds to catch at every portentous circumstance, and to make it the ground of an appalling prediction, there is also a disposition in others to close the ear against those precursive murmurs of the anger of Heaven which ordinarily give notice of the approach of its judgments. A caution should be entertained, as well against the levity of the one party, as against the superstition of the other. Meanwhile it is a plain and simple matter that, whatever measures we should deem imperatively necessary if certainly forewarned of impending calamities, are not the less proper, because our actual forewarning amounts only to the appearance of an ominous concurrence of events.

Who will deny that, at this moment, there is signally needed some extraordinary effort on behalf of the outcast thousands of the people, whom we have culpably suffered to grow up in the heart of our christian land, more profligate and more perverted than Hindoos? The exigency of the time calls for a disregard of every puny scruple, of every jealousy, of all ecclesiastical reluctances, and of all sinister views. The dense masses of our atheistic and much-degraded, as well as miserable population, should be assailed and courageously entered, by men thinking of nothing but how they may turn the impenitent from the error of his way. If ever it be wise and manly to sacrifice the less to the greater, would it not *now* be wise and christian-like to break through ordinary and petty obstacles, and to contemn frigid calculations; rather than that two, or more, millions of the people should longer be left as they are—utterly destitute of religious knowledge, and

of every hope? If certain personages are reluctant to assign this work of popular evangelization to the alledged indiscreet zeal of sectarists—the path is open to themselves; the crowded streets of our great towns are not barred: and how noble a spectacle would it be, to see men of the highest order, the SUCCESSORS OF THE APOSTLES, supported by their colleagues of all ranks, mingling kindly with the people, and inviting the wretched to accept the consolations of the Gospel! Are precedents wanted to justify so extraordinary a course? Let then our protestant church look to the church of Rome; and single instancess at least, will be found of episcopal zeal not less magnanimously irregular. Alas! the church of Rome may boast examples of apostolic greatness and intrepidity, which protestant churches have failed to imitate.

If there seem to be irony in such a proposition—whence does that irony draw its force? Assuredly no derision would have been suspected if, in some hour of public fear, it had been asked of Cyprian, of Gregory, of Athanasius, of Hilary of Ambrose, of Augustine, to set a necessary example of evangelic charity, in publishing abroad the hope of salvation, when to multitudes, that hope must instantly be received, or not at all. Is it true then, that it sounds like the most preposterous of all possible suppositions to imagine a mode of proceeding *in our times*, such as Cyprian, and Gregory, and Athanasius, and Hilary, and Ambrose, and Agustine, would certainly have adopted, under similar circumstances?—Sad inference, if this be the fact!

But it is not warrantable absolutely to conclude that the line of conduct demanded by extraordinary events, will not be adopted when a vivid conviction shall be felt that such

a season is actually approaching. Nay, there is reason to believe, that although much inertness may have fallen upon all religious bodies, as the consequence of long-continued repose, it will be shaken off when that repose is effectively disturbed; and that whatever is worthy of Christians, and of *men high in rank*, shall indeed be attempted and performed in the hour of trial.

V.

THE MEANS OF MERCY.

"—*The Gospel—the Power of God to Salvation.*"

To what extent the sacrifice once offered for the sins of mankind has actually taken effect, we neither know, nor have the means, in any degree, of surmising. The world of spirits is veiled. The inspired writers are silent; and theological rigidity, together with bold conjecture, should be checked, on such a theme. Meanwhile it is certain—as certain as the Gospel, that the mercy of God has had no other channel; and that to each of us, severally, there is—a hope in Christ; and no other hope.

Nothing is more desirable than that each one should bring this most important of all truths very distinctly before the mind. This may actually be done by a process that is not elaborate, or difficult. Is there a human memory that bears inscribed upon it no one act of deliberate transgression of the plain and unquestioned maxims of virtue?—If there be, we will exclude the immaculate instance from our present consideration; and will turn to those whose consciences forbid them to advance any such pretension; and ask them to single out, from the entire course of their personal history, that one occasion of flagrant misconduct which (by right of its enormity) first starts to view, when an inquiry of this sort is made. We speak of a *signal* offence; not because the most trivial sin would not really, as well as the most grave, bear the

stress of our argument; but because the mind, from the indistinctness of its perceptions, does not act decisively, or promptly, unless it is handling an object of some magnitude. And now, having before us this one definite affair —this unpropitious transaction, in which we were the chief party, or principal—this matter of history, which no power of oblivion can erase from the page where it stands —which no agony of remorse can alter or alleviate, even in the most minute particular, let us look to it, as something (no matter how large a space of time intervenes between it and our present self) which has become inseparably linked to our identity; so inseparably, as that it is, and shall remain *ours* for ever—and ours, even if we could take wing and escape beyond the bounds of creation. No power, no decree, human or divine, no amnesty, can actually alienate from a man his property in a crime he has perpetrated.

Let us then contemplate this companion of our existence —and let us extenuate, conceal, adorn, the unpleasing reality. How peculiar were the inducements;—how much did circumstances, in which we were not to blame, concur, almost to necessitate the act! Virtue, at the moment, was not on the alert. And then the actual injury that resulted was not nearly so great as it might have been;—ourselves were the chief sufferers:—amends have been made:—the victim even, has forgotten the wrong:—the world has pronounced a full pardon:—nothing—nothing remains; —but memory and conscience:—it is as if it were not. No; we cannot ourselves fall in with this illusion. There have been cases in which a man, disordered in mind, has thought himself incessantly followed by some ghastly phantom:—he has mixed in the crowd;—he has hurried from place to place;—he has plunged into the heart of

revelry, and has fondly for a moment believed, that he had actually eluded his pursuer :—no ;—at his side the cruel persecutor still stands up, and mocks his endeavours to escape. But the crime with which conscience holds so much familiarity, is a far more real and terrible companion. In the one case, if the mind could not be disabused, and restored to soundness, the shadowy form would melt away, and be forgotten ; but in *this*, the more the mind is sane, and vigorous, and calm, the more palpably and vividly does our grim attendant stand forth in our path.

Or in order to feel, the more sensibly, the *reality* of our guilt, let it be placed by the side of a very possible supposition ; namely—that the temptation had been repelled—the force of evil passions withstood—the voice of conscience, which we well remember to have heard—listened to, and a victory actually obtained over the trying seduction. Is then the difference between compliance and resistance of no account?—is it a circumstance not worthy of remembrance, whether a man stands or falls before his enemy? Victory, we should have thought much of :—is not defeat as notable an event as conquest? But if it may not be obliterated, in what light are we to regard this deep stain of sin, which has sunk into the soul?

Can we not bring ourselves to believe that the common notions of mankind, and the affirmations of religion, concerning invisible government, and retribution, and the difference butween good and evil, are a dream and a nullity? This, if it could be done, would rid us at once of every uneasiness. True—our crime stands on record ; but we have no more to do with it than with the forgotten deeds of antediluvians. Alas! no pains will avail to realize such a persuasion! Even if the positive and irrefragable proofs of the truth of religion could be subverted,

an unquenchable instinct of the soul remains to retain hold of the notion of a moral system, and of law and justice. This sense of the fitness of RETRIBUTION flashes upon us, in some form, every hour. We cannot read a page of history, we cannot listen to the news of the day, we cannot walk the streets, without forcibly admitting the idea, that there must be a vindication of right: nay, we often court the expectation of it;—sometimes as witnesses, and sometimes as victims of oppression, or of cruelty, or rapacity, we fly to the relief of ultimate justice; and, even apart from any *vindictive* feeling, are agonized if we imagine that the controversy between the oppressor and the oppressed shall never—never, be adjusted. If, at any time, the films of false philosophy have deceived us into the opinion that vice and virtue are one and the same—this sophistry shares the fate of many other sophistries, in practical matters;—that is to say, it is instantly and irrecoverably scattered by our first brunt with some real affair of common life, that appeals to the ordinary sentiments of humanity:—the illusion fades—truth and nature stand out, and speak aloud, and we dare not refuse to hear them.

But if there is to be retribution *at all*, if *any* crime or cruelty, the most atrocious which history records, or which history has forgotten, is to be brought to account in an after-life, and is to receive its due award of chastisement;—if the authority of God, as Governor of men, is to be in any manner asserted, and maintained, then is it possible to believe that such retribution shall be otherwise than ABSOLUTELY IMPARTIAL? and when we say *impartial*, we must mean that it shall be in the strictest sense UNIVERSAL. It must bear alike, and equally, upon every responsible agent, and must come close home to the entire merit and demerit of each. Shall small offences escape

inquiry, while egregious sins only are brought into court? This could not be; for the perpetrator of enormous crimes might justly turn round upon his exculpated companions, and affirm that, if all circumstances of temptation and original disposition were fairly weighed, the actual balance of guilt would be in his favour; inasmuch as some who had *seemed* to sin less, had actually sinned more, by sinning with fewer inducements, or with more advantage for virtue. Or shall Supreme Justice take notice only of those offences that have in fact been peculiarly pernicious in their consequences, and the occasions of misery to others? This mode of proceeding would be liable to an objection equally conclusive. For the offender, so singled out on account of the actual mischief he had caused, would be entitled to complain that his fate was ruled, not by law or intrinsic demerit; but by *accidents*, over which he had no control; and it would be easy to find instances of much worse *intention* than his own, which, on this system, would altogether escape unpunished. There is in fact no justice, that is not universal justice. Justice altogether is nullified, and disgraced, by even a single, and the smallest instance of oblivion, or inequality, or perversion of facts. Who would come forward and profess to wish that the law, which is taking effect upon his neighbour, should turn aside from himself.

If we here reason upon this subject on the common and intelligible principles of human nature; it is precisely because HUMAN NATURE is in question; and because God's proceedings towards man will (more exactly than we often suppose) justify themselves to all minds, on these same intelligible principles. If then, on one hand, we exhort the theologian not to assume *more* than is contained in such simple rules, we adjure the culprit not to assume less.

But now, may it not seem as if the offences of men—themselves insignificant as they are—were utterly unworthy of becoming the subject of judicial proceeding in the court of Heaven? Unworthy of judicial proceedings!—Is any such rule acted upon, or admitted on earth? Let us look to the mightiest empire that ever has existed, the sovereign and the chiefs of which have taken to themselves so vast an importance, that the welfare of whole provinces might not be weighed against their most trivial convenience or pleasure. And then let us seek for the very meanest of the degraded beings that lie obscure in the quarters of want. Is the wretch ambitious of distinction? would he fain draw upon himself the eyes of the mighty?—does he covet to stand among princes?—Then let him insult the majesty of government:—let him but commit a crime, and his wish is accomplished. Though nothing else could possibly have given him importance—Treason shall do it. And it shall presently be seen, that the highest personages of state are busy with his interests:—No affair of the realm is deemed so urgent as that the hearing of the cause should be finally neglected, or the accused be suffered to make a jest of royal power. Whether he is to be condemned or absolved, punished or pardoned, he must at all events be made amenable to law, and be dealt with in some manner which shall leave no stain either upon the principles, or the administration of the empire. And this rule of procedure is valid and constant, just in proportion to the excellencies, the equity, and the firmness or vigour of a government; and of the very best government this is the praise, that justice is carried home to all persons alike, great or mean. In a state the most free and wise that can be imagined, the sovereign himself would never be thought to forfeit his dignity, though he were seen to be assiduously

employed (if needful) day after day, in ascertaining the guilt or innocence of the very lowest of his subjects. Do we approve this principle? Unquestionably then it shall be found to belong to *that* Government which is absolutely good and just.

Yes, if nothing else can confer importance upon man—his crimes shall give him consequence. If there were no other argument for a future life, SIN would furnish one, never to be refuted. We need descend into no depths of abstruse reasoning here:—the simplest notions are conclusive enough. There is a cause standing over between the Impartial Judge, and ourselves; and a time for the hearing and decision of it must certainly come. If indefinitely delayed, and forgotten, all loyal orders must harbour dissatisfaction and fear; while all who have actually been called to account and punished, will protest against the partiality. If conscience be but awake, the transgressor, as he stands at the verge of the present life, may thus properly decide upon his own fate. "I have sinned and perverted that which was right. Let me hide myself in the darkness of the grave! No; for God's ministers, and all beings—good and evil, shall demand me at the hands of Death, and forbid I should be forgotten. The dust may not screen me—the clods may not cover me. Corruption may not say I am lost and gone. The highest tribunal is waiting my appearance; and unless I am made there to stand, the honour of all government is blasted—the perfections of God impugned. True, I am insignificant; but yet am party in a cause in which the wisdom, and purity, and power, of the Eternal God are in question."

It is quite another matter to ask how the crime and the culprit are to be treated. What we have now to do with is only this—That every crime, and every culprit, must

eventually come under legal and retributive notice; and must, in some way, consistent with good government, be finally disposed of. We must grant this, or else throw out of our scheme of human nature every notion, and impulse, and mode of acting, that implies law and justice—good and evil. If we can actually do so, then let us plunge at ease upon the unknown world, with a thousand crimes upon our heads.

If not, the question comes—How is the transgressor to be dealt with? And now, if we will but adhere to those intelligible ideas which tacitly regulate human affairs, we shall see that, if ever any authority or tribunal winks at offence, or allows the offender to elude its jurisdiction, or if it remits all inquiry, such an evasion takes place on one of these two grounds—either *first*, That the administrative power is felt to be too feeble to go through with the cause, in the instance of so formidable a culprit; and that therefore it is better to put up with the first disgrace, of not making inquiry, rather than endure the dishonour of declaring guilt, which it has no sword to punish:—or *secondly*, That the offence passes up to a higher tribunal. *This* is a sound and creditable reason for the remission of inquiry, or for the non-exertion of judicial powers.

But when the cause *has* so been passed up, through court after court, and comes at length to the last and Supreme tribunal, shall it *there* be set aside? It may, even there, if the Supreme Power is infirm; or if it be corrupt:—in other words, if the forms of law and justice are mere pomps, of which all men make their mirth. We do not indeed deny that the First Magistrate, in a vigorous and equitable government, may, if he so please, pardon the culprit;—far from it. But we absolutely deny that he can (unless feeble or corrupt) fail to take cognizance *in*

some manner, of each, and of every cause, which, after having been remitted in turn by inferior courts, is formally assigned to himself as supreme. To pardon an offender upon his submission and confession, is not to wink at crime, or to lay oblivion upon law;—unless indeed pardon has so become *the standing rule* of administration, that men are fain to doubt whether there exists at all thepower or the will to punish. In such a case penitence and pardon would both be mockeries; and neither to be respected more than the motions of wooden figures, the one of which always lifts the arm, when the other lets it fall.

Can we actually bring together, or hold in union, any such incongruous ideas, as those of a system of law and retribution on the one hand;—and the practice of *Universal Pardon*, dealt out to offenders by the ultimate and Supreme Power? If *all* are punished, and punished equitably; none indeed can complain; and no confusion is brought in. But if *all* are pardoned; and pardoned as a mere act of clemency, the very substance of government is made nugatory. If pardon is the *rule*—punishment the *exception*, then law is blamed; or administration proved imbecile. In good and firm governments, *punishment* will be the rule, and *pardon* the exception:—and yet even this exceptive pardon sullies the brilliancy of power and wisdom, unless clearly it is seen to spring from some law higher or more comprehensive than the law which has been violated. To PARDON WITHOUT REASON is an error, on the part of a sovereign, of which the same may be said as is said of other errors—that though a single instance will not destroy a man's reputation, the frequent repetition of it infallibly will do so. A man may be weak once, or thrice; and retrieve his character; but if he be weak daily, what is thought of him?

Yet what is it *to pardon with reason*, but to act *according to a rule;* only applying, in each instance, the rule that is in fact most applicable to it. On this principle, the idea of blind or indiscriminate forgiveness will be quite excluded from our conception of the Divine Conduct.

And now, whoever can persuade himself that it is safe to do so—let him go on to the point where death is to meet him (that point is fixed) with his sins, and take the chance of either not meeting Justice in the next world, or of being able to clear himself from its demands. And let him go (would it not be wise?) well schooled in all those abstruse and conclusive arguments by which it has been shown —that there can be nothing formidable in the Divine Character; nothing inflexible, or firm in the Divine Administration;—or that the Most High must needs give way to the urgency of the case, when the culprits are found to be millions of millions in number! Or that he will certainly be moved to relent by a candid acknowledgment of error. The tribunal of Almighty God will be a fit place for discussing metaphysical principles of government! And the spirit, just shivering in surprise as it has gasped from the body, will doubtless be in mode to make the best of its own cause, and to plead extenuations!

But we should not accumulate terrors, or endeavour to carry our point unfairly, by kindling the imagination. No; let nothing stupendous or appalling, nothing ghastly or horrific, be supposed. Let nothing be thought of but what cool reason, backed by every probability, must anticipate. Reduce the idea or expectation of the ultimate tribunal to the smallest possible dimensions: let it be thought of as frigidly as we can. The ministers of justice are calm, dispassionate—kind even, and mindful only of their duty. Yet assuredly they will do their duty. If the

methods of proof are to differ from those which, of necessity, are resorted to on earth, the *substance* of the proceedings will be the same. By what means soever made known—it is *the truth* that will come out. None shall be wearied by the tediousness of the trial;—leisure enough shall be granted to carry it through. A man's deeds, in due succession, shall be recounted: and the most succinct and satisfactory method, perhaps, will be for himself to recount them. He may well be trusted to do so; for he feels at every pore, that the atmosphere of truth is about him. Nay, a blaze of light penetrates his very nature, and the table of memory, like the face of an obelisk, thickly inscribed, and fronting the sun, may be read by all.

We need do nothing to fill up our idea of law and justice in the future world, but take as our pattern, the law and justice of earth:—freed only from the imperfections that attend them. These imperfections are—that liability to error which sometimes throws the punishment of the guilty upon the head of the innocent—and the inapplicability of law to any but certain overt acts of sin; so that it is not more than a sample of the wrongs actually committed by men upon their fellows, that is cognizable to statutes, or liable to punishment. How often does it happen there are found, among the grave assessors of judgment, men far more odious in heart, and incomparably more pernicious to society, than the haggard and misguided wretch, who stands trembling at the bar! And how often, in the crowd that presses around the scaffold, might hundreds, be singled out, who deserve to die five times, for the one death inflicted upon him whom the sword of Justice (blind Justice) is to pierce! These disparagements of human law, though great, are irremediable. But the inequalities and the errors that thence arise, shall be rectified

in the world of truth. Every offender shall there take his turn at the bar; and every offence shall pass under inquiry; and the verdict in each instance shall be a true one. Who can complain of such a course of things?

Those then may be very bold—*who have no sin*:—assuredly the tribunal of Almighty God shall do *them* no harm! Alas! multitudes have gone to that tribunal with the preposterous confidence of innocence, who, in the eye of God's impartial law, shall be found more guilty than many an abhorred victim of human justice!

But what say we of the penalty?—Shall we amuse our leisure by showing the inconclusiveness of certain terrific and probable arguments on this subject?—Shall we spend the hours of life that remain, in gathering reasons which may seem to make it less than absolutely certain, that the very worst that has been affirmed or thought of—shall prove to be true? Shall we court those dreams concerning the lenity of the Divine government, which the miseries even of the present life are enough to dissipate? Nay rather, let us admit at once the belief, confirmed as it is by sound reason, and established by religion, that there are purposes, far more extensive and profound than ordinarily we think of, to be carried through upon the human race, by the vigour of Almighty Power. Rather than any longer debilitate the moral forces of the mind, by giving ear to flatteries that breathe the very nausea of sin, let us take up, as the first axiom of our religious notions, the truth—That "it is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God!"

But there is mercy for man. "The Gospel is the power of God for saving all who believe!"—Whoever will, let him convince himself, if he can, that the Divine Mercy might flow in other channels than through the Mediation

of His Son;—or that it might, without any restriction or condition, spread over the world of sin, as the ocean covers its bed. Such an argument, and the idler who pursues it, must be left in the rear. The infatuations of the sensual and frivolous part of mankind are amazing; but the infatuations of the learned and sophistical are incomparably more so. Or the difference between the two, is as the difference between folly and madness.

Every proof that could be made to consist with the rules of evidence, establishes the truth of the Christian Religion. The *subject* of the Christian Religion is the controversy to which sin has given birth, between God and man;—the *matter* of the Revelation it contains, is the announcement of absolute forgiveness, through the Mediation of Christ. And what is the complexion or character of this Gospel remission? It is not the consequence of the abrogation of law. It is not a repeal of penalties. It is not a disparagement of Supreme Wisdom. It is not a deduction from the supposed power of inflicting punishment—and especially, it is not such a *mere act of grace* as, in the nature of the case, must not stretch very far, lest the punishment of any should seem a captious severity—and pardon an unavoidable compromise.

The pardon of the Gospel—is PARDON FOR A REASON:—that is to say, it is pardon granted in compliance with a rule, higher, or more comprehensive, than the law which was broken. The pardon of the Gospel, therefore may be extended without reserve; because the reason whence it flows is greater than all other reasons. Even if it were to appear at the last, that the myriad has received pardon, and the thousand has been left to endure punishment, the principles of administration would not be sullied; because, while the demands of Justice are definite, the provision of Grace is unbounded. Grace encompasses Justice.

And yet, if in any manner we surrender the Divine dignity of the Mediator, the REASON OF PARDON at once disappears; and the government of God is clouded. Or, (and it is a certain indication that the harmony of truth is spoiled,) the conscience of man receives no lasting peace. Conscience may indeed remain in its native slumber, or it may embrace flatteries; but when once it is quickened; when once the purity of law, and the impartiality and vigour of the Divine government have been admitted—and the thought of standing at the tribunal of God has firmly lodged itself in the mind, the well-founded fear of condemnation is in no way to be allayed, until the SUBSTITUTE of the sinner, is known to be THE VERY PARTY, whom the sinner has insulted!

VI.

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.

"*The world knoweth us not.*"

That peculiar species of arrogance termed Spiritual Pride, may probably still be found here and there within the precincts of religion; for we must not suppose that any evil incident to human nature is absolutely extinct. Let it be confessed then, that there are persons, calling themselves Christians, who, confident that they are the special objects of divine favour, look abroad upon the impiety of mankind, and exult to see they have so few competitors for the honours they pretend to!

But as it is usual for the most obtrusive or singular property of any aggregate body to be imputed to the whole, by those who care not to inform themselves correctly of that of which they speak, it happens that irreligious men assume this same spiritual pride to be, not merely a fault to which religionists are liable; but the universal characteristic of all such persons; and if called upon to explain the fact of the segragation of a portion of the community, on the ground of purer principles than others profess, they deem themselves to have reached the depth of the mystery when they tell you, that (incidental causes admitted) ghostly arrogance is the secret of all extraordinary professions in matters of religion; a theory this, which, to say nothing of it on the ground of charity, will be found as consonant with truth as those theories usually are, which a

man frames in impatience and vexation, merely to obtain riddance of a perplexity that gives him frequent annoyance and some alarm.

But those who know human nature better, and religion better, and the peculiar temper of the age better, do not need to be told that, if spiritual arrogance has prevailed among Christians (by profession) in certain eras, it has, in our own times, very generally given place to a feeling almost of an opposite kind. The same melancholy facts which, a while ago inflated, perhaps, the pride of some self-styled favourites of Heaven, are now contemplated by believers in the Gospel with a painful emotion, not only of pity and sorrow, but of timidity and discouragement. A mode of thinking at once humane and comprehensive, has in greater or less degree, spread through the church; a new habit of reflection on the condition of mankind has grown into use: and in the very proportion that Christians have desired more ardently, than heretofore, the propagation of their faith, and have done more to effect it, they have the more become liable to an emotion of sad amazement, or misgiving when they think of the millions afar off, that know not the Revelation of God, or of the thousands at hand, that hold it in contempt.

This sedative and uneasy feeling (ineffably abhorrent as it is of spiritual conceit or elation) very naturally attaches most strongly to those who have most general intelligence, and modesty (the attendant of intelligence) and are most conversant with the world; and who are moreover accustomed fairly to weigh peculiar claims and professions. Such persons, and not a few such are to be found, could as soon draw a sinister and malign gratification from the disobedience of a son—the treachery of a friend, or the false imputation to themselves of a crime, as from the sad truth

that multitudes of their countrymen and the great mass of mankind, are destitute of piety.

The deep and genuine uneasiness that accrues from this source is enhanced, or at least is rendered more oppressive, by the considerations that arise from an exact and impartial estimate of the *ostensible comparative merits* of the religious and the irreligious classes: and while, in surveying the latter, a feeling of scrupulous or punctilious candour, and an anxiety to adhere to philosophic justice, dispose them to reckon, at its fullest value, whatever seems good and praiseworthy, and to listen to every extenuation of what is evil; in reviewing the former class, a sensitive regard to the honour of Christianity (in the abstract) a high conception of the standard of piety and virtue, and a keen jealousy of imposition, lead them into an excessive or faulty caution, in the scrutiny of religious profession; and generate an over-wrought fear lest they should attribute a particle of excellence too much to the side for which the praise of true wisdom and goodness is exclusively challenged.

Under the influence of feelings like these, Christians are tempted to conceal, if it were possible, from themselves, or to maintain silence on that inference which their own hope in Christ obliges them to draw, concerning the peril of those who refuse the great and only salvation which man can know. It is not arrogance, but timidity, of which the Christian body should now be arraigned by the world. But as the world is in error in the capital principle—so always in the special points of its quarrel with the church; —it blames that which is praiseworthy, and if, at any time it applauds, makes choice of some blemish, or laxity, as the subject of its commendation.

A hearty recognition of that obnoxious truth which the

Scriptures often affirm, and everywhere suppose—the partition of mankind, in the sight of God, as his friends, or his enemies, is more or less difficult, according to the circumstances of the times we live in; and will be so in the highest degree precisely at those moments when, in a peculiar manner, it is important; namely, when the diffusive influence of Christianity is so great as to lessen much the apparent difference between Christians and others; by which means obscurity is thrown upon the first principles of the Gospel. It is plain that, in an age when the purifying doctrines of the Scriptures have as yet had no operation beyond the walls of the church, and when, moreover, within those limits, the Gospel is exerting its fullest influence, Christians, conscious as they are both of hopes and of virtues to which none but themselves can pretend, are liable to no embarrassment (whatever grief) in taking up the apostolic profession—"We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness." While the church and the world are in any such relative position, each exhibits its proper internal quality, in the most conspicuous manner. Purity belongs to the one:—shameless corruption to the other.

The case is reversed when, even if the primary and efficacious power of religion be not much abated, its secondary and diffusive influence has become slowly matured, and is very widely extended. At the very season in which Christianity is conferring the greatest benefits upon mankind at large, by cleansing the atmosphere of the social system, by shedding abroad a general light, and by reproving and repressing flagrant evils, its genuine adherents are the most strongly tempted to suppose that the difference between themselves and others is not vital, or not of infinite consequence. So fatal a surrender of the peculiarity of

the Gospel is little likely to take place while all the skies are darkened by the smoke of idolatrous worship, and the church is beleagured by open war.

But nothing less than a very distinct and forcible conception of things spiritual will avail, in times like our own to keep alive on the mind a truth equally certain and momentous in one age as in another—that whoever is not, in a definite sense, a Christian, is "yet in his sins," and in peril of the future judgment. The last surviving Apostle when, in the age of Trajan, he looked abroad upon the Roman world, might (inspiration apart) boldly decide as he did in the controversy between the friends and foes of his Master: but to do so now (unless we assume the rule of the sectarist, who judges men by a name) demands, not only all the firmness and courage of true charity; but an intimate knowledge of the REASON of such a decision.

And if the inducement silently to compromise what is most peculiar, and most obnoxious, in their profession, is, to all Christians at the present moment, strong; it is so in an especial manner, to religious writers;—or we should say to those religious writers who, renouncing the favour and patronage of any single body of Christians (a bold measure) are tempted, as a resource, to court the good-will of the world. Besides; writers of this order, in taking position above the level of petty eminences on which others stand and in adhering to the maxims of absolute independence, and impartiality, and in shewing their abhorrence of all sinister practices in matters of religion, bring themselves into correspondence or contact, with men whose philosophic candour, and largeness of mind, might afford the ground of a firm coalition—if it were not that, on the one side principles are professed which the other looks upon as matter of offence, or of scorn. Now in this peculiar

exigency, the advocate of the great principles of the Gospel is fain to seek for any means of conciliation, that may seem lawful and available. How gladly would he come to agreement with those whose intellectual simplicity might lead him to choose them as his friends; or to look to them for the only praise he covets! With this view more expedients than one may be resorted to.

The first, perhaps, is to employ his pen on subjects indirectly connected with religion, or of secondary importance;—cautiously abstaining from every explicit allusion to those great matters which the world "will not receive," nor the church favourably listen to, unless pronounced in accredited terms. Or if he attempts the higher themes of Christianity, he may endeavour so to approach them through the circuitous and subterraneous passage of abstruse reasoning, that, while his meaning escapes the notice of simple folk, the wise and knowing shall be taken by surprise, and made suddenly to emerge, to their amazement, in the open court of the Temple—or at the foot of Mount Calvary! Or such a writer may fondly think that he shall succeed in so shedding around the principal matters of faith the splendour of secular eloquence, as shall charm classic ears, and enable him to beguile and detain those whom he could not simply convince.

Much that is plausible might be said in behalf of these, and similar methods of conciliation. But even if they had not, in experiment, proved of small or doubtful utility, a special objection would rest against them, drawn from the peculiar character of the times. The movements and workings of a social system have become too deep and potent, to leave room for operations of a slender, ambiguous, or insinuating kind. We are come to no easy and gentle mood of the world's history. This is no hour of

leisure and facility, and soft persuasion. Whoever dares not speak explicitly, and boldly, had better not speak at all. Nothing can now avail the cause of truth but the courage which truth ought to inspire.

The middle region, or neutral ground, on which a mild haze rests, and where men of adverse parties might amuse each other with indistinct and interminable parleys, that having no serious intention, could have no determinable result, has been of late almost entirely deserted. Stragglers, and the idle remain there;—the frivolous and the infirm. But men of vigour (of all parties) have gone off, and taken another position; have severally moved forward, at quick pace, on the course toward which they had been looking, at leisure. The adherents of the Gospel must then either forfeit all chance of a hearing, or act with a correspondent energy and promptitude. If in any time, during the course of ages, there has been need, on the part of Christians, of that boldness which walks abreast with truth and wisdom, this is such a time. And it is now that whatever is capital and essential in Christianity should be clearly and strenuously affirmed. And now it is (how unutterably desirable!) that whatever overloads, encumbers, defaces, our faith, should be thrown aside. The day we have to pass through will assuredly prove that private loyalty to Christ is not enough for the champions of the Gospel. Whoever is loaded with the stuff of this world—whether interests or prejudices, will be chased from the field, or fall there ingloriously.

Those must have allowed themselves to think confusedly; or have scarcely thought at all; or have been doating upon dreams, who have not learned what is the moral condition and tendency of a vast mass of our countrymen, perhaps the majority of almost every rank, at the

present moment. And if indeed any are thus ignorant of what it behoves all to understand, the next evolution of the social body—the natural and (unless prevented) inevitable expansion of existing causes, will amaze them, as if it were the most unheard prodigy. It is thus, usually, that those sudden changes which the historian (benefited as he is by his knowledge of after facts) sagely speaks of as the simple consequence of precursive events, astound the men of the age in which they happen.

A certain order of intelligence (not founded on principles, and open to impulse on any side) has, as every one knows, spread rapidly through all orders. And while none but the lowest or most degraded class has failed to take a share in this advancement, the classes next in elevation to the lowest have participated therein in a degree which bears no proportion to any improvement that has had place in the highest class. Those who, within a brief period, have stepped forward far in advance of their late position, see well that the interval between them and their superiors has been lessened, almost to the whole extent of their own progress. The upper rank has not become *wise*, in the proportion that the inferior has become *knowing*. We need be no great proficients in human nature to divine the sentiments, unconfessed and latent perhaps, which such a perception will engender; and yet it is not precisely with *these* sentiments, or with the consequences they are likely to involve, that we are here concerned.

The statement of the general fact of the intellectual advancement of the people is now trite; nor can it well be called in question. But what is the bearing of this state of things upon Christanity? verily we believe it to be favourable;—if those causes are taken into account which lie quite beyond the range of secular calculation. But far

otherwise if secular and visible causes only are to be looked to; and it is with these alone that human agency is connected. The sad truth is most conspicuous, that though the diffusion of knowledge has not alienated from Christianity those who were already effectively acquainted with it (far otherwise) and though multitudes, to whom the recent light has scarcely reached, remain nearly where they were, in matters of religion—that is to say, as ignorant of it as Caffres;—there is a great body of the people, of every class, whom it has served to detach or to disaffect, or to prepare for any sort of impiety. And yet men do not very readily shake off even the prejudices they hold in least esteem; but retain them as habits, and look to them wistfully, after the substantial surrender has been made. And so it is that Christianity—its formalities at least, stands now on the threshold of thousands and tens of thousands of our English homes—melancholy sight—like an offended or slighted inmate—ready to depart for ever; and yet not quite resolved to go!

Untaught, unguided, and in suspense on all momentous subjects, myriads of the English people, who have learned to think, but who receive no sound instruction, listlessly contemplate the speckled Christianity of our times—uncertain what part to choose; and therefore actually choosing the part of impiety, or of fatal indifference. Whither should they resort? Not (or it is only the debauched who will do so) not to the teachers of atheism:—impudent and frantic men, who have given the best refutation to their folly, by their enormities! The English character must fall many—many degrees below its present level, before it can happen that large masses of the community, or any thing but its scums and dregs, shall be seen to circulate around these vortices of impurity and blasphemy.

What then are the alternatives?—Shall this detached mass, rife as it is with conceit, as much as with intelligence, quietly yield itself to be moored back to the haven of established forms, to which it has already become strange? Shall those whose prime lesson, in all that has been taught them of late, is, that whatever is ancient is therefore faulty, accept anew, as good and right, a system which the lapse of centuries has not benefited by a single amendment? It were well if it could be so. Would to God that the erring of dubious thousands of the people might, even now, and under almost any condition, fall back upon the Great Truths which the Reformation gave us, and which the National Church preserves! But alas! can we seriously anticipate such a movement?—In *a sense* we grant it to be probable:—those who hope well for what they term—"The Church," are thinking only of the most meagre and insincere conformity. This is all they care for—all they understand. Now nothing absolutely forbids it to be supposed that the classes of which we have spoken may continue to yield an external and occasional compliance with certain national religious usages which, *when so complied with*, are of as much value as beads and holy water, or as the praying windmills of the Tartars. *This* sort of Church of Englandism may perhaps endure a while longer:—Who shall say how long? But are we so dull in understanding as to wish that it should? Do we not know that matters of ritual which may have some real value and wholesome influence (though not of the highest kind) while a people are in a simple or *primitive* state, that is to say, while they are ruled by sentiment—by venerable prejudice, and by association, cease to possess any utility after *sentiment* has been dispelled by the spirit of incredulity and mockery? We have learned nothing

of what has been taking place of late, if we imagine that, either the 'squire, or the citizen, or the artisan, who now comes up to the altar, or attends his offspring to the font, is a being of the same order as was his father or his grandfather. Are we then satisfied, and do we think that all is well and safe, merely because the 'squire, and the citizen, and the artisan, still bring their bodily presence to church, even though we know, or might know, that instead of the heartiness and the reverence of the past generation, the bosoms of these men are harbouring contempt, repugnance or a fixed infidelity?

Amazing inobservance!—if we can suppose that, to the people such as they have actually become, it can avail any thing the way of moral or religious influence—to frequent church five times in the year—to be christened, confirmed, married, in due form;—to receive the sacrament at the last exigency, and to be buried as believers. The nation has gone beyond the power of these forms. The Parish Church stands where it did; but the mind of the country has escaped from between the sacred walls. Not universally indeed; far otherwise:—we are speaking, not of the passive and sluggish portion of the the community; but of the active, and sensitive, and intelligent—or the half intelligent. And ought the welfare of such to be a matter of no solicitude?

But even if the slenderest sort of conformity were all that we cared for, the course we pursue is very little adapted to secure it. What are the simple facts?—In the hearing of the people the original defects of the national forms, and the abuses that have grown upon the establishment, have lately been talked of with the utmost freedom. The people have listened, while men, the best informed, and the most moderate (not the enemies of the Church but

its friends) have confessed the necessity of revision—have implored attention to the great question from those who should first take in hand. But all this discussion, all these entreaties come to nothing! Nothing may be hoped for. Pertinacity is to have its triumph—perilous triumph! It is a point of honour to spurn amendment. To change an iota would be to acknowledge that the Fathers of the English Church were not inspired—were somewhat inferior to the Apostles. That which indeed is venerable and good in the national forms and modes (and it is much) must be put in peril for the sake of enforcing from the people an irrationable homage to certain excrescences, which all men inwardly abhor!

Such are the infatuations that controul human affairs! Ruin thus wilfully produced, is no new thing;—it is the common order of events. So much wisdom as might conserve, rescue, restore, re-edify, belongs not to mankind;—and for want of it, when the hour of peril comes, nations are thrown upon revolution and anarchy. And yet every thing seems to invite and to facilitate that line of proceeding which the times call for. In the English character there is not only sobriety and moderation, but a singular readiness to greet with applauses any proof of good intention, and honesty, and intelligence, in persons of high station. True—faction is always awake among us; but there is also (and in the great mass of the people) a prompt and cordial approbation of whatever is manifestly *well meant* by governing powers. The nation—that is, the thousand to the one, would bear aloft upon its shields whoever would now act for it the part of courage, and prudence, and conciliation, in matters of religion. The nation would put the violent and the captious to shame—yes, and it would return with joy to the walls of a wisely re-established Church.

But the hope of any such restoration is fond and vain! —While the people are daily falling off from Christianity, because their highest welfare is not thought of—because their actual state is not considered—because the salvation of millions of souls is a trivial matter, if it implies the giving up of this or that childish prejudice—while these things are happening, our creeds and forms shall be preserved—to a tittle: and to secure so high and worthy an end—to secure it *in the actual state of the country*, all the corrupt motives of acquiescence must be doubly stimulated: the people, in the many modes which state policy is skilled in, must be bribed to quietness and silence. And especially, they must be taught that, in matters of Religion, if man be but pleased—God is always easy. All this must be done:—yes, and it shall prosper—if the Almighty has consigned us to desolation! And is it so then, that our sons, and theirs again, are to be driven down the steeps of unbelief; because, for sooth, the jealousies of the imbecile, and the emoluments of the corrupt, must not be touched!

But it is loudly asked in another quarter—Whether the intelligent thousands of the English people might not do better, or have not an alternative, besides that of bowing to infidelity, or of cringing to an establishment which will listen to no reproofs?—Difficult question! or difficult unless we are willing, and able, fairly to place ourselves for a moment in the position of the persons of whom we are speaking—the intelligent, yet imperfectly informed, and irreligious, of all ranks. If from that position we look abroad upon the many-coloured array of our religious parties, we shall instantly cease to wonder that Christianity in England has as little reason to boast of extensive triumphs under its simplest, as in its most elaborate forms. The grand mischief whenever we are endeavouring to as-

ail the prejudices of others is this—that we do not, or will not, consider the light in which ourselves, and our attempts, appear to them. It is too much to expect that our uninformed neighbours, or our countrymen at large, should make themselves conversant with that prodigious mass of theological lore which must be known before any one can fully and fairly appreciate the justificatory argument of each of our sects. To exculpate each—*to respect* each, a man must be familiar with the circumstances of the times wherein it originated; he must be master of the merits of many entangled controversies, and must fairly and calmly estimate the mutual influence of sect upon sect. Not a whit less labour and diligence is necessary for correctly measuring the respective claims of religious parties, than would make a man erudite in the most multifarious of the sciences. Nothing of this sort can reasonably be looked for.

Meanwhile the intelligent, and the half intelligent—the *few* who are thoroughly well informed on all subjects—except religion;—and the myriads who now know something of many sciences, but nothing of this, can hardly be blamed if they take up a notion which, though substantially false, is apparently rational. Such persons (lamentable case!) are impelled to suppose, either that Christianity is so indeterminate a system that its most careful and serious adherents are unable to fix its meaning, and therefore that it is well to keep clear altogether of the anxious perplexities it involves; or—that, by some fatality, it breeds a spirit of trivial scrupulosity, productive of interminable discords. It will be, for the most part, utterly in vain to assure such misjudging spectators that their idea of the religious parties is incorrect and distorted. The *ostensible fact* will outweigh all explanations.

Thus it is that the souls of men are sported with on all

sides! How little do we consider the infinite mischiefs we occasion when we give indulgence to SMALL MOTIVES in matters of religion!—Would to God that, at length, good men might learn to calculate all the consequences—remote and distant perhaps, but immensely important, of that theological and ecclesiastical inflexibility, by which they think to prove their loyalty to Christ! Alas, those for whom Christ died are fixed in unbelief by the spectacle of this same immoveable purity!*

Let it be granted, and it is unquestionably true, that the entrance of the Gospel into the human heart is vehemently opposed by that hostility which is the product of the defection of the race; and that this hostility is independent and irrespective of any exterior disadvantage under which Christianity may labour. Yes; but obstacles of this intrinsic sort, which have always to be encountered, great as they may be, are not found to prevent the triumphs of religion, *where its spread is not prevented by other causes.* The Lord vanquishes his own foes; and he does so with omnipotent grace and ease. To break and subdue the

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* Our sects (the principal of them) are the product of the same era that gave us our Establishment: and the one form of Christianity is just the antithesis of the other. If the advancement of society in the course of three centuries renders a revision of the one indispensable; so does it of the other. Rocked by the winds of discord in the same cradle; though always at variance, Dissent and Conformity are alike *antique*; and while both happily comprise the great and unchanging verities of the Gospel; both are what times and men have made them. The dissident loudly speaks of this obsolete character of the Church. But impartial men will be apt to think that, if we ought now to see something better, or more mature, than was thought of, or could be effected, by Cranmer, Jewel, Hooker; a like revision should take place of the notions and institutions of Brown, Prynne, and Owen.

human heart, with all its obduracy, and to cleanse it, notwithstanding all its impurity, is his proper work. And he glories to perform it. But when the Gospel comes to a stand, or sleeps within its limits, from age to age; or only slowly spreads along with the increase of population, the cause of the stagnation is to be found, either in the sluggishness, the feuds, or the follies of the Church;—not in the universal enmity of the heart to God. The Lord does not interpose to overcome that hostility or contempt which the misconduct of his people calls forth. It is the secondary or incidental, far more than the primary prejudices, that hold mankind at a distance from truth. We refuse to see and believe this; and therefore marvel at the impiety and obduracy of mankind; when nothing is more conspicuous than its proximate cause.

A candid review of the entire course of Church history must convince any one, that very high degrees of personal piety and virtue—piety and virtue even of the most exalted order, often consists with a participation of egregious errors, of that sort which attaches more to a body or community at large, than to individuals. This truth has been lost sight of in every age; and in our own times. For example; while we know by personal consciousness, and by happy fellowship with others, that Christianity exists among us in much vigour and purity, and is bringing forth its fruits in all quarters of the land, we repel indignantly the supposition that *the entire Christian body* may be capitally in fault. And yet, were not the Jansenists, and the men of Port Royal Christians? Were not Pascal and Fenelon men of God? Well were it, if we could now match them in elevation, devotedness, spirituality. Nevertheless, did they not stand forth as the zealous (not the passive) adherents of their Meretricious and Idolatrous

Church ? and in every age that same Church—collectively abominable in the sight of Heaven, has embraced on her false and foul bosom, worthies, in whom the apostolic age might have gloried.

Is it not then a culpable delusion which would impel any party to resent suppositions of the kind now in hand merely because piety, fervent, pure, and zealous, is seen to be flourishing among us? How much of that piety does the world know any thing of? The world enters not our closets: knows nothing of our hearts; and knows but little, even of the exterior behaviour of the obscure thousands who must adorn their profession. But it sees, and knows, and ruminates upon, our visible disagreements:—it measures our alienations;—listens to the din when angry spirits wake the winds of strife; and, in a word, discerns whatever is discreditable;—is uniformed of, or incompetent to appreciate, whatever is true and good.

Who can say what might now have been the religious condition of England if our several dissident communities had, a century ago, calmly and wisely returned to the path which their freedom from political control left open to them —which the plain rule of the New Testament points out; and which common sense so distinctly approves? Almost confidently it may be affirmed, that an unbroken harmony among its opponents, must have compelled, or would have induced, the Established Church, both to revise its forms and constitutions; and to rescind its ill-omened demand of an unconditional and universal approval of the same, as the term of communion. And then, on the other side, how much such a proof of the vigor and glory of the Gospel has affected the minds of the mass of the people! Our faith in Christianity altogether is put in jeopardy, if we hesitate to believe that a Harmonious Church—freed from all

secular hostility, or restraint, would fail to spread itself rapidly, and to prevail.

"The world knoweth us not:"—sad truth; for it means nothing less than this, that the bulk of mankind still remains far from God and hope!—Sad, even when the blame of this ignorance rests altogether upon its victims; but how ineffably afflictive, when the fault is shared, in equal portions, between the world and the Church! If this age of dimness is soon to pass away, it will ere long be seen that the Head of the Church, either by the stupendous movements of his providence, or by conferring in a signal manner grace and wisdom on his people, removes from it that reproach of culpable folly which extenuates the impiety of the world.

VII.

STATE OF SACRED SCIENCE.

"—*Thy testimonies are my meditation.*"

An obvious distinction leads us to distribute the study of Holy Scripture under three heads; namely—1st, The *devout* and practical; 2nd, The *critical*, or verbal; and 3rd, The *scientific*, or theological. If the first of these be wanting, there is no piety at all, and no virtue in the church: if the second, no certitude; no good sense; no barrier against extravagance, heresy, or infidelity: if the third be at a low ebb, there is no intelligence; no advancement, and therefore, by necessity, a retrogression and decay in that kind of knowledge which should furnish guidance and motive, both to devout and critical studies; and which especially should gather in the fruit of the latter.

Of the first of these branches of biblical study, it may be said, that if it does not at present signally flourish, neither is it remarkably deficient. The second is the *specific praise* of our times; and waits only for the aid it should receive from the third, to reach perhaps its acme. Of the last, nothing can be affirmed that is very encouraging; unless it be the negative advantage (and this is a real one) that the room it should occupy stands vacant.

It is a law of the intellectual world—That the mental connexion between words or customary phrases, and the ideas or notions they represent, tends incessantly to dissolution; and that the rate of this dissolution is accelerated, or retarded, in proportion to the frequency with which

such words and phrases pass over the lips of mankind. This *gravitation*, which bring the heavier substance (knowledge) down, as a *residuum*, and leaves the lighter (language) to float as a frothy crust on the surface, is to be counteracted only by *continual agitation of the mass.* Illustrations of this law are abundant in every department of philosophy. Let it, for instance, be supposed, that at a certain period, metaphysical studies are eagerly pursued; —that the energies of many vigorous minds are intently concentrated upon them;—that multitudes of the educated class make themselves familiar with the rival systems that are promulgated; and that, as a consequence (whether or not truth be ascertained) the entire vocabulary of abstract science passes under deliberate review, receives new modifications, and is issued afresh, like a coinage, in full weight, duly assayed, and with a sharp image, and resplendent surface.

Now if it should happen that this study, so revived and invigorated as to tighten anew the bonds that connect words with ideas, does, after being consigned to books, disappear in the very next age; or is cherished and transmitted only by a small number of the learned class—in that case the men of an after-age may find it, as it was left, and where it was left: and may bring abroad the long latent science in all its beauty and precision.

But let us imagine, on the contrary, that this same metaphysical philosophy had gone down to the next age, and then to the next, in all its popularity; and had continued, as at first, to constitute the ordinary topic of converse among well-informed persons; and yet had not, in all that time, drawn to itself any *renewed energy*, from powerful minds; but that each generation, transmitting what it had received, imparted to it no reanimation. The inevitable

consequence would be that the principles, axioms, deductions, distinctions, and modes of proof which we should find on all men's tongues, would be on their tongues, only. And not only would it appear that distinct ideas and notions had, to a great extent, subsided from the popular mind; but that such as were retained, bore extremely little resemblance to those that belonged to the original science. For though *men* had ceased to work upon the philosophy, Nature and Time had been busy with it, and had imposed upon it many strange modifications.

The history of Science has many times verified the operation of these laws; and indeed the revolution only of a few years is often enough to exhibit their influence. Let but some hotly agitated question of policy, or political economy, cease to be *vigorously treated*, and yet continue to be matter of common conversation; and we shall find, in ten years, or seven;—perhaps in three, that words, phrases, and wonted forms of expression, on such subjects, have slipped their meaning; and being disburdened of the weight which once they carried, have taken the wing, and float, vague, and idle, in upper air.

Scriptural knowledge is open to the same influence; but happily not to the same extent; or rather, not without powerful correctives. For although religious principles undergo a far more extended *pervulgation* than those of any secular science, they arise fresh from the spring-head more readily and copiously, than any other truths. Nor should we omit to include, or fail to take great account of, that perpetual and invisible agency from above, which maintains always the connexion (more or less complete) between piety and truth; so that, even when sacred knowledge is at the lowest ebb, *as a science*, or is almost wholly neglected by men of intelligence, it lives essentially wherever faith, humility, and prayer, are found.

That portion of Heavenly Wisdom which, under such circumstances, survives and is cherished, will be just the first articles of belief—the SAVING RUDIMENTS* of spiritual life. Of these, the Head of the Church himself takes care lest faith should utterly disappear from the earth. But beside the inestimable jewel of elementary knowledge—the price of which can never be told; does there not rest within the folds of the Inspired Book an inexhaustible store, which the industry of man (piously directed) ought to elicit; but which, if men neglect it, the Lord will not force upon their notice? It is this hidden treasure which should animate the ambition of vigorous and devout minds. From such, at second-hand, the body of the faithful are to receive it, if at all: and if not so obtained for them, and dealt out by their teachers, nothing will be more meagre, unfixed, almost infantile, than the faith of Christians.

A consideration of many circumstances (some secular, some ecclesiastical) and of circumstances independent one of another, is involved in a question relative to the present state of the scientific, or theological knowledge of the Scriptures. Without pretending to treat, at large, so great a matter, we shall casually mention some points that first present themselves.

At a time when the Christian community is not in any sense secluded: is not defended in purity, or *compacted* by the overt hostility of the world, it is natural that the spirit of the Church should be nearly one and the same with the common spirit of the age. And if we ask, Why do not the higher and more recondite themes of sacred knowledge receive the profound attention of distinguished men, and from them descend to the mass of Christians?—

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* Heb. v. 12.

it is both just and natural to reply—Because *nothing* that is profound, recondite, or great and arduous, in any line, commands much respect, or absorbs the energies of eminent minds.

It has now become trite to announce the fact that ours is the age of diffusion, abatement, mediocrity: and while the philanthropist, as he justly may (to some extent) triumphs in the course which the human mind is taking, few stop to calculate the remote consequences of the course; or ask what may be its immediate but less obvious results.

If a complete analogy subsisted between the worlds of matter and mind, there would be a palpable reason always for exulting in the levelling of eminences;—an operation which (mathematicians tell us) elevates the general surface whereon lately they stood: but the inference from the one system to the other is fallacious; or at least imperfect. The fact is certain, that this age of warfare upon whatever is exclusive, or select, this day of "scattering," not of "gathering," is singularly wanting, as might have been anticipated, in those higher qualities and manifestations of the human mind which refuse to be doled out and shared among the many. The Individual Power which history fondly looks to disappears. The history of our times, when it shall come to be compiled, will be that of *masses*, not of *persons;* of communities, not of leaders.

Now after all has been granted that can be said in recommendation of this order of things, it remains to ask, whether an unbounded expansion of the energies of the intellectual world does not bring with it a probable decay and decline of each power? There are those who will affirm the contrary; and will tell us that, in matters of mind, *diffusion* is *accumulation:* and *participation enhancement.* Our sons will be able to pronounce upon

this problem more certainly than ourselves: meanwhile it must be admitted that those productions or discoveries which most ennoble humanity, or enlarge our sphere of thought, sentiment, or action, are not germinated on the surface; are not concocted abroad; rise not from the fermentation of rude masses; but come from the secrecy of individual bosoms; and do not bless the world until after they have reached some maturity in their womb and cradle.

Nature, it is probable, bestows upon mankind, from age to age, a nearly equal measure of intellectual power. But the splendid instances of original endowment make their appearance or not;—rise to the surface, or remain buried in the soil, according to the temperament of the times. And if prevailing barbarism, and civil anarchy, and a taste for war, repress or destroy the germs of mind; it is also true that, in eras of boasted advancement, and universal or general refinement, they may fail to be evolved, from the want of shelter, of peculiarity, of privilege, and of the concentration of exciting causes. Genius, as it has often been said (and we may include every species of high mental power) flourishes most midway between the two extreme points of social advancement; or just in that stage of its progress where *the few* possess the greatest possible advantage over *the many*, consistently with that degree of intellectual life in the many, which opens a field, and affords motive to the ambition of the few. Europe, as it seems, has already gone through that bright middle season;—has given birth to her complement of illustrious men;—has done with the admiration of CHIEFS; and will henceforth move forward, in mass, by the force, and under the guidance of the COMMON MIND.

The true character of the age is not incorrectly indicated

(indeed is very fairly represented) by the style of our literature: and the style of our literature, and the influences to which it is subjected, are so intimately connected with the state of theological studies, that they demand special consideration.

The extension of knowledge, and the incalculable multiplication of readers, has effected, in an indirect manner, a revolution in literature as *complete* as that produced by the invention of printing, though less conspicuous. The simple circumstance that books have become one of the most considerable articles of commerce, has reversed the direction of the influence of which the press is the medium. Our literature is commanded, or controlled, by the people; and only in a secondary sense commands them. The READER has grown into an importance that makes him lord of the WRITER. Authors furnish (how should they do otherwise) that which readers ask for; or will receive. Until of late, and in all informed communities, men of high endowments exercised, in their several departments, a sort of domination perhaps more exempt than any other from the reaction of the governed upon the governing power. Not absolutely, but yet in a great degree, mind has wrought alone;—has produced its fruits spontaneously; and has confided those fruits, without fear and without care, to the admiration and conservation of mankind. For the better or the worse, writers have, in all ages but our own, been the leaders of the intelligence of the world.

We speak of this new order of things at large, and in its essential character, without denying the many exceptions and mitigations to which it is open.—But if a plain fact is to be spoken of in plain terms it is this, that Books have at last thoroughly come under the laws that regulate the quantity, quality, fashion, form and colour, of silks,

potteries, furniture, jewels, and other articles of artificial life. Now who does not know that the purchaser of any such commodity must (whatever special circumstances may seem to disguise the fact) stand in the relation of Master to the manufacturer, the artist, the workman? The exceptions to the rule are—when the production is of so rare or *peculiar* a kind that a monopoly is enjoyed by the few who can appear as venders:—or when the demand is so *limited* that the traffic escapes the notice of the spirit of Trade: and so enjoys a sort of snug liberty, under shelter of its mere insignificance. Both these circumstances have, in former times, protected literature from the interference of commercial motives. Neither of them is now in operation.

Whatever is important enough to attract to itself a large and fair proportion of the capital of a country must, spite of the sensitiveness or high sentiments of any of the parties concerned, yield obedience to the paramount principles of commerce. It is an illusion to suppose that any very extensive or permanent exemptions from the laws of trade, can have place *in matters of trade.* Mind struggles much against these mighty powers; and writhes under their tyranny: but its resistance is successful only in single instances; or for an hour. Our modern literature has ONE REASON, and of this reason the buyer is the sovereign; and the vender the interpreter; and the writer the slave.

When therefore a boast is made (and it is a well-founded boast) of the incalculable increase of general intelligence, and of the spread of taste and knowledge, two conditions of this improved state of things should be kept in mind;—namely, the present or immediate effect of it upon *the productive class;* and its probable, we might say certain effect upon the next age. As it would be an absurd petulance to repine at that course of things which none can

turn, and which confers benefits upon myriads; so would it be absurd to suppose that a literature thus *overruled* by the myriad, should continue to be the same in quality as it was in classic eras, when it led the taste of the smallest and most select portion of the community. Can we indeed believe that a revolution effected under influences such as we have named, will be altogether favourable in its results?

The change that has occurred not only affects the style of writing, and the choice of subjects; but the ultimate motives and purposes of authors:—controuls their principles, or destroys them; and even more, it determines, in a great degree, what individuals shall exercise the function of authorship; and what be restrained from doing so. Those who, under the ancient order of things, would have written from spontaneous impulses, and at the call of direct motives, and who would have occupied the arena almost alone, stand now in a position essentially unlike that of their more fortunate predecessors. For not only have they to sustain a dubious comparison with competitors, more likely than themselves to win immediate applause; but the utmost degree of success which they are likely to obtain, consisting in the admiration of a small class in their own and other countries, now appears so mean a thing by the side of vulgar celebrity, that it takes to itself the shame of positive failure. The peril of this sort of disgrace outweighs (it is probable) in some highly gifted minds, the ambition of distinction, and retains them in obscurity.

While we are rejoicing in the numerous band of accomplished men who so ably occupy the press; we should pause and ask, whether some of its legitimate masters are not holding back, and refusing to exercise their function. It may moreover fairly be questioned whether the order of nature is followed, or abandoned, when the contact of

writers, in the highest departments, with the imperfectly educated classes, is *immediate*. Heretofore it has been, that the slowly matured products of great and tranquil spirits, after passing through minds of the next rate, have been disseminated over the wider surface of society by their means. Now it is plain that what is written and intended for the class of *instructers*, will be very unlike that which is prepared directly for the instructed.—It is indeed always well that writers should labour to attain perspicuity, and simplicity, and vivacity; but it is well when they feel themselves compelled (as in terror) to avoid whatever supposes in the reader high culture and intelligence?

It would however be a culpable inadvertency not to mention the reaction, or rather *interaction*, which at present is going on between readers and writers. If writers have, too much become the obsequious servants of a slenderly-informed multitude, it is also true that while they are anxiously mindful of their master's wishes, and careful not to offend, and especially not to perplex him, they reconcile themselves to the degradation they undergo by striving to dignify their labours with as much abstract excellence as may consist with popularity. By this laudable ambition the taste of the public is improved; and, as a natural consequence, a still better commodity than at first is asked for, and favourably received. This amended taste stimulates again the endeavours of writers; and it is hard to say where the continual approximation to what is good, will find its limit.

Nevertheless the highest fruits of mind are of a constitution far too delicate to be thus produced. Under the present mercantile regimen the diffusion of knowledge may spread much wider than it yet has; and at a quicker rate; and a certain amount of intelligence may become the

common property of the people:—but is there not reason to predict the non-appearance of works that might descend to distant ages? And as the experiment is new, it remains to be seen whether, even general intelligence can be long upheld while decay is taking place in the higher departments of literature;—whether the mind of a people can be kept alive *at all*, on the democratic principle;—whether, in a word, the course we are running on, though crowded with gaiety and stir, is not leading to the depression of learning, taste, and philosophy.

Whatever may be the anticipations we form on this subject, they would but imperfectly hold good in matters of Religion; for the rise and fall of religious feeling and knowledge are determined by powers (divine and human) that lie quite beyond the sphere of the causes we have adverted to. In reference therefore to *this* class of literature, we are safe only while looking to actual facts; and must leave futurity untouched. And even in reference to what is under our immediate observation, great exceptions must be reserved in favour of what does not shew itself on the surface of the religious world:—we well know that all that is purest and best lies in the deepest obscurity. If it were not so, it would be disheartening indeed to remember that religious literature, far from being exempt from the law of trade, is, in some respects, more directly subject to that infelicitous despotism than any other branch. But counteractive causes are powerful, and always at work; and it is happily by no means true that religious books are nothing better than what the commercial influence would make them.

The actual operation of the existing economy of the literary world upon religious books, is to be discerned more in its negative than in its postive effects. That is to say,

though our theological and devotional publications are not so much vitiated by the interference of commercial motives as might have been anticipated, these causes act directly (in combination with others) to discourage and repress that higher order of composition which the Church now most stands in need of, and which the venders of books, with a sure foreknowledge of their small success, are wont to frown upon. Works which would slowly and surely benefit the mass of Christians through the intervention, and by the means of a few hundred readers, are not produced, because, on the existing system, they cannot be published; or if published would be lost sight of in the crowd of more specious candidates for public favour.

The higher class of religious composition is moreover sensibly acted upon by another influence, of which it is hard to say whether it be, on the whole, most sanatory or injurious—invigorating or enfeebling; namely, the publicity, we should say *exposure* which now attends the expression of religious sentiments through the press. A book is of course, at all times accessible alike to all purchasers—is open to all eyes. But there have been but few eras in the Church (probably none) in which religious writings were actually so much placed under the eye of the irreligious as now they are. The mode and organs of this exhibition are not necessary here to be specified. But the influence of so much exposure, though not always obvious, is not unimportant. Whatever in the circle of religious publications may, by the aid of ingenious perversion, be employed to fortify unbelief—to gratify spleen, or to tickle the levity of irreligion, seldom escapes the quick sight of those whose bread is earned from week to week, from month to month, by catering for the malign passions of mankind, or its prurient frivolity.

Upon whom does this liability to exposure press with the heaviest disadvantage? Not upon those to whom (rightly understood) it might be most serviceable. There are religious writers who, far from being daunted by this sort of publicity, seem rather enheartened by it to give the reign to their taste for the enormous whims, or virulent excesses; and who claim the praise of pious valour in setting all contempt at defiance. There are too, some, whose happy insensibility, or whose sheer forgetfulness of things around them, enables them to speak and write before all the world, as if the walls of a monastery were between them and mankind.

But it is not so with others; and not so with some who best might reanimate the church by lofty strains of sacred eloquence. Feebleness and over-caution—a latent thought of the profane world, check our course heavenward;—nothing is so rare in religious literature as the boldness, the freshness, the manly force, the profundity, the elevation, which give a charm to our older writers. It seems as if we had forgotten that as the hope of the Gospel must, by the necessity of the case, be an object of mockery to those whose mad devotion to the present life, and rejection of the future, imply contempt of whatever is true and great, it is as well to meet this mockery on higher, as on lower ground.

While the modesty and meekness of the Christian temper are preserved, what is so becoming to the public advocate of religion as the highest tone of confidence and fervour?—If other men are entangled in endless surmises, or deluded by futile theories, he *knows* on what ground his faith rests. He knows whom he serves:—his calculations are all formed on a clear foresight of futurity. On the present scene of things—its eager frivolities—its childish

impetuosities, and its turbulence and its virulence, he looks with a feeling hard to designate; for it is not contempt; not petulence; not indifference; not misanthropic scorn; but yet gathers something from each of these emotions; and has the force of all, without the poison of any. Of whom should the public and well instructed advocate of the Gospel be afraid? He has the highest truths in his possession; and is hastening on (with all around him, coadjutors and opponents) to the hour which shall well vindicate the part he has chosen, and well conclude the course he has run!

It is the want of a fearless and aggressive energy which at the present moment, emboldens infidelity, staggers the wavering, and leaves the ground open to the watonness and the impudence of visionaries. How great a revolution in favour of Christianity might, under the conduct of the Divine Spirit, be now effected by the intrepidity of a single champion, whose courage, firm as that of the apostles, should be sustained by piety and wisdom like theirs!

Partly in obedience to the law of mediocrity, which rules the age, and partly in uneasiness from the publicity that attaches to religious literature, those who might be competent to treat the loftiest themes, betake themselves to lower ground, where, while their talents and accomplishments insure them distinction, little is hazarded. Matters of fact and erudition;—all things minute, definite, and immediately applicable;—the fields of history—technical criticism, and ingenious elucidation, are safe and facile. The ephemeral controversies that spring from collission of our religious factions, are also free from the peculiar peril which weighs upon us. And happily, too, the very humblest style of devout or practical exposition is exempt from the eye and interference of the giant criticism we tremble

at. These and similar topics employ therefore superior minds.

But who ventures to rise toward the upper region of celestial meditation! Who forgets the world—its madness, and its scorn, while he enters the gates of immortal hope? Who is it that, as if the contemners of Heaven were not in hearing, converses with, and concerning, the glories of the Supreme? Who, with a reverent yet uncurbed eloquence, fitting the occasion, speaks of the mysteries of Redemption?—Or who, regardless of the powers of calumny that keep their state as ministers of vengeance around the throne of ancient Prejudice, explores anew the half-hidden, half-revealed wonders, that yet couch beneath the words of the Scripture? Labours like these, and enterprises so great, demand, in times such as our own, an intrepidity equal almost to that needed to profess the Gospel at the stake!

While the rudiments of truth are happily preserved among us, there never has been an age, perhaps, wherein less of the intensity of the meditative faculty was concentrated upon sacred themes, than at present. Our biblical industry is all devoted to *the letter:* and it must be confessed that exegetical erudition abounds in a very fair degree. These lower studies (indispensable indeed) fall in marvellously well with the frigid timidity of the times, and with its love of *palpable utility:*—they run glibly by the side of those practical and applicatory sciences which are receiving universal homage. Professors and students of theology feel to be quite in harmony with the spirit of the age, while they thus confine their attention to matters of fact—to things small and tangible, and which may instantly and visibly be carried home to some specific point of interpretation.

Shall we then, because we wish for what may seem more great and substantial than we see, invite the return of some one of the obsolete forms of theology? Better be meagre as we are, than be *so* enlarged. And yet it must be admitted that those ponderous schemes of sacred philosophy, though they spoiled, in their turns the simplicity of the Gospel, did call into exercise a force of mind—a sustained power of comprehension, and discussion, which have long ceased to appear within the precincts of the Church. The Platonic, or profound and meditative theology, after a long reign, fell before the activity and the tactics of the Aristotlean, or logical and disputatious. This again, having lived to its dotage, received a deadly wound from the hand of the Reformers; who erected in its place its IMAGE, the Dogmatic theology; and to this all men did obeisance:—and still in measure do so; for it has neither given place to a successor, nor been formally consigned to oblivion. Nevertheless it exists rather in skeleton, to fill an unclaimed chair of state, than exercises any positive domination. Nothing rises in the room of the ancient systems. There is silence in the halls of Sacred Science, as if all men were waiting, in anxious expectation of the descent upon earth of the bright and fair form of Celestial Wisdom.

And yet this meagerness of our theology has its palliation, and even its praise. Who would exchange the laborious benevolence of our times for the intellectual power of past ages?—It is the just commendation of the (spiritual) Church of the present day, that it prefers the propagation of the Gospel, and the service of humanity, to every other pursuit. So long as the sad reality is before us, of the ignorance and irreligion of the large majority of mankind, nothing (it is felt) should be much thought

of, nothing much employ our energy, but the great and exigent work of evangelizing the nations. While our brethren of mankind are untaught, unblessed, desolate, and without hope, our private tastes must be foregone, and our personal advantage delayed, or even abandoned. Charity demands that, leaving untouched the hidden treasures of the sacred volume, we hasten to carry the necessary bread of life to all that are famishing. There is a true magnanimity in this determination, and a just praise, that ought to shield from rebuke many deficiencies, Provided always, that such deficiencies are properly and truly attributable *to the perpetual assiduity of our zeal.*

Even if the labours of Christian beneficence do not fill all hours, and all days, they scarcely allow of the formation of those opposite habits which are demanded by arduous studies, and without which advancement will scarcely be made beyond the rudiments of evangelical knowledge. The *temper* and the *serenity* of meditation are disturbed. Amid engagements differing not very much in their spirit from those of common business, the soul is thrown from its centre, and finds it hard to regain its equipoise. Meanwhile (and it is to be noted) the public and sedulous spirit of the religion of the day, although it barely admits of the growth of celestial wisdom, does not, in the same degree, forbid the acquirement of matter-of-fact erudition. This sort of learning may well enough be accumulated in any temper of mind, or amid any distractions; nor can the utter want of it be well excused by any circumstances. There is therefore an intelligible connexion between the increase of Biblical or textural science, and the decay of the higher kinds of sacred knowledge; as both stand related to the distracting quality of our public engagements.

The decline of Theology is favoured, moreover, by in-

cidental causes, which, as they are inseparable from human nature, and not directly blameworthy, may be adverted to without offence. Men of sense, and of fair information, well know that there are, within the range of religious meditation, subjects which cannot with much hope of advantage, or even with propriety, be made matter of open converse until after much patient and private consideration has been bestowed upon them. They ask for days, or months, of devout attention. Too ingenuous to stand forward as moderator of serious discussions, upon matters of this sort, without the prerequisite competency, he who is centre of his circle, and who feels himself responsible for its movements, deems it a point of discretion to hush, or prorogue conversation. In this manner religious intercourse, even in the best circles, takes its range lower than well it might. On the one part, it becomes tacitly a rule (and especially while so much extravagance is abroad) to hold all great or exciting themes under interdiction; and on the other part, a point of good-breeding and deference, not to moot any such questions. There is left open whatever is most trite, vapid, and unimportant.

But that kind of *Discretion* which seeks safety in ignorance and silence, is always short-sighted, and fraught with peril: or if there have been times when it might be put in practice, *this* is not such a time. The remarkable tendency to extravagance and exaggeration which distinguishes the present era, we may confidently say is to be encountered, and held in check, only by free, candid, intelligent, Biblical learning. Cautions—interdictions—comminations, will not serve us; such modes of treatment may retain within the bounds of sobriety those who are in little danger of being seduced from it, namely—the timid and the sluggish; but will only hasten the departure

of those whom we shall most grieve to see led away. It is not perhaps unfair to regard the heresies, and the follies, and the rancorous conceits that are now preying upon the intestines of the church, as the natural consequence of the *unthoughtful*, and *unstudious* habits, that have grown upon us. During now a long course of years we have been running hither and thither—spending our days in crowds;—have lost all relish for mental labour;—have abhorred the toil of private meditation—have applauded only that which tends to maintain and promote an artificial agitation of the spirit. We deny a hearing to writers who ask to converse with the Reader in his closet. We have become thoroughly superficial, not to say frivolous, in matters of religion: or, in a word, have reduced ourselves to a condition in which we have no alternative, but to follow every egregious phantasy that shews itself, or to wrap ourselves in the thick mantle of ignorance and apathy. Poor preparation this, for arduous times!

We do not look to all the consequences of that movement which is rapidly going on.—Whenever the Christian community comes to be pretty evenly divided between the adherents of a servile "SOBRIETY," on the one side, and the eager votaries of novelty on the other; it must soon happen that all high belief and credulity will belong to the latter; while a disposition hard to name—but not altogether unlike *Scepticism*, will characterize (or secretly influence) the former. Visionaries and fanatics, of all classes, feel, as if by instinct, that to admit any sort of check in their course—to listen at all to mere reason—or to grant that any dogma is less than infallibly certain, is to lose hold of their prop:—the tumid expansion of the mind dwindles;—a mortal chill enters the heart; and all is lost! —Reckless belief, more and more voracious every day,

is the necessary mode of this order of feeling. And it must be granted to find a palliation or apology, in what is now happening around us, when a bold Atheism in one quarter, and the spread of an insidious theological infidelity in another, seem to make unblenching faith the capital virtue of a Christian.

Yet who does not know that exorbitant credulity, which overlays Christianity with absurdities, can never make head against unbelief? Much rather does it promote the mischief it oppugns. This at least is clearly seen by the "discreet" party among us; and the inward disgust given them by the vehemence and intemperance of many, disposes them to entertain, too favourably, the modern sceptical theory of interpretation. It is not that this theory is accepted or accredited; but it lodges itself in our closets; —is spoken with in secret;—advice is asked of it under difficulties. Yes, we are dealing with the German Infidelity, much as an honourable man who has fallen into embarrassments, holds a whispering parley at a private door with a usurer, whom he knows to be plotting his ruin.

The truth must be confessed, that the foreign Biblical criticism severely tries our English orthodoxy. It tries us not because it is strong and sound; but because we have not in readiness either that *exercised* power of mind, or that erudition, with which it should be encountered. There is indeed a bluff pertinacity which is a proper defence in a moment of surprise:—but it must be used *only for a moment;*—that is, only until we can assume our weapons. In adopting a permanent mode of repelling those who assail our convictions, we must neither take a lesson from the stupid and obstinate animal that rolls himself up, and presents his globe of bristles to his foe, nor from the timid one that runs to his burrow at any alarm.

If indeed we cannot rebut German infidelity by reason and learning, our prospects are deplorable.

Against the licentious impiety of France, which blown high by the winds of political agitation, broke upon our shores forty years ago, and threatened to shatter the entire structure of our Christianity, we were (as the event proved) pretty well provided. We understood the grounds of our faith, *as then assailed;* and adhered, not blindly, but intelligently, to our principles. France, rife with profligate sophistry, and bold by ignorance, challenged us tauntingly to throw off, as she has done, the "obsolete belief;"—and to become, like her young sons—"gods, knowing good and evil." But we understood, far better than herself, the *merits of the question:*—we looked to that question manfully; gained new convictions; and under the aid of the Divine Favour held (in the main) our glory, as "a nation keeping the Truth."

—And we still hold it;—but are now put in peril by a far more insidious attack upon the first principles of faith. The strength of the French infidelity consisted altogether (ribaldry apart) in an endeavour to *supersede* the proper question of historical evidence, by mooting abstract controversies which, if determined in the atheistic sense, would at once sweep the world of the notion of immortality, in whatsoever manner attested. This endeavour failed, partly because of its intrinsic absurdities; but chiefly in consequence of the insurperable force of the direct proof of the Gospel history, which men, unless infatuated, could not be induced to forget. But we are now deterred from having prompt recourse to the same rational and efficacious means of defending our faith in miraculous intervention, by our solicitude to listen to what recommends itself by erudition which we wistfully admire, and dare not call in

question. Every particle of the German infidelity must be scattered to the winds, when it is proved, that Jesus rose from the dead. We fail, or delay to convince ourselves on this capital point; beeause the men who will neither ingenuously deny it, nor candidly admit it, are able to entertain us with a thousand felicitous elucidations of the evangelical records, such as we had not dreamed of.

To refuse a hearing to these men would be to forego an immense benefit:—to expose their error in the manner it demands, would seem ungrateful: or it would ask for more energy and promptitude than is found among us. Or let it be said, that we are disheartened by the conscious want of that *original erudition* in which the foreign professors excel. Alas! we have to import learning from Germany, before we can say any thing to its sophistry!

In this exigence some betake themselves to a rude persistency in whatever they have heretofore thought to be true; whether so or not; some to virulent declamation against, they know not what Demon—called Neology; and some to a timid, respectful, inconclusive armistice with the adversary; the result of which must be advantage to the assailant, and loss and damage to the weaker side. Meanwhile the main problem of German Infidelity is not dealt with; and there is reason to fear that the full effect upon English Christianity of that idle theory, has not yet displayed itself.

But it is not altogether improbable that the course of affairs in the north and centre of Europe may so set at large the German infidelity as shall disabuse our English deference towards it:—*Set it at large*—that is to say, release the learned stipendiaries of the foreign universities

from the embarrassment they labour under of holding their appointments as *teachers of Christianity*. Here and there a fond dreamer excepted, men will not go on toiling, year after year, in the bootless task of reconciling things which they well know to be incompatible—except from an imperative motive. Provide for these professors liberally in another manner, and we should soon cease to be either instructed or annoyed by their biblical speculations. —Give them posts and emoluments, on some other condition, and they would for ever leave prophets and apostles alone. Many of them, no doubt, are honourable men, and loathe the part they are acting. It is pity that their services were not at once discharged from religion, of which, with all their learning, they know nothing, and concentrated upon general literature, which they might promote and adorn.

Should such a revolution occur, and the German Biblists become honest unbelievers; what is the course our English divines are to take? Shall they, to hide more speedily the shame of their late deference to men who made a jest of such homage, banish from their shelves and their memories for ever the entire mass of sceptical criticism? This would be pusillanimous. Rather let them, with a manly energy and industry, and in firm reliance upon the aid of the Divine Instructor, move on, and occupy the vacant and desolate ground of theology. Let them so become MASTERS of whatever relates (remotely or immediately) to religion, that they may avail themselves of the ill directed learning of the modern foreign scholars, and feel as secure from the mischief it contains, as we do when we turn to the admirable literary labours of the Benedictines, or the Jesuits.

We must learn, by the aid of an invigorated and well-informed industry, FITTING THE URGENCY OF THE TIMES, to combine the public labours of Christian Charity, with arduous studies; and especially with the habit of profound meditation upon the higher matters of Divine Testimony.

VIII.

THE HIDDEN WORLD.

"The things that are Unseen are Eternal."

THE main prerogative of the human mind is its power of gathering general principles from a multitude of diversified forms or appearances. This faculty, to a greater or less extent, developes itself in all men; but in some is so vigorous that it predominates, and gives law to the dispositions and pursuits: in such instances its exercise is attended with a pleasurable emotion of the most vivid sort. The pre-eminence of the faculty of generalization constitutes what is termed the philosophic character.

The delight wherewith minds of this class contemplate universal truths, or abstract laws, does not so much spring from perceiving that some general principle holds good and re-appears in a great number of instances that very nearly, or perfectly resemble, one the other; as from discovering the occult presence or efficacy of some such principle in a multiplicity of cases which have few points, or perhaps, no other point of alliance beside this one of their obedience to the same general law.

The more there is of external diversity, or unlikeness, or of apparent contrariety among the particular instances that are thus allied by their subjection to a common rule, so much the more of keen satisfaction or delight will be afforded to the mind when it detects the hidden principle of union. And not merely does diversity of *form* enhance the pleasure of generalization, but it is augmented, also

by mere remoteness of time or place. Thus, if we could glance for a moment at the surface of some world immensely distant from our own, and there recognize the operation of the same principles of life and organization with which here we are familiar, this perception of analogy would generate a pleasurable surprise, made the more intense by the recollection of the vast stretch, or wide empire, of such common laws.

These elements of intellectual enjoyment are richly furnished by the studies of the naturalist. Now, it may be he compares family with family of the vegetable and animal world; and, after marking the ostensible peculiarities of each, descends beneath the surface of their external differences, and lays open those great and uniform principles of mechanical or chemical structure, to which all are conformed; and (if the figure may be used) he listens, and hears all beings uttering, in their several dialects, one and the same code of physical existence. Or, turning from the present system of things, the lover of nature explores the deep strata of the earth, gathers thence the fossil remains of long extinct tribes, and, with more pleasure than the vulgar can conceive of, or he express, brings to light the unvarying laws of animal organization, as they held their sway ages ago, among orders the most strangely unlike to the species of the recent world.—Whether he looks to the extreme distances of space, or of time, the naturalist, after giving a moment to the obvious or common gratification that springs from novelty and diversity, seeks and soon finds the more lasting and substantial pleasures of reason, while marking the oneness and harmony of nature, even where her clothing and her colours, and her proportions have the least of uniformity.

If we might so speak, it is by her *diversities*, her gay

adornments, her copious fund of forms, her sportive freaks of shape and colour, that Nature allures the eye of man, while she draws him on to the more arduous, but more noble pursuit of her hidden analogies. *Unlikeness* awakens his attention; *uniformity*, or simplicity, fixes and enchains it; and, by the pleasure it confers, ensures, on his part, the laborious investigation of abstruse principles.

While the human mind is thus employed, an insensible process goes on, the effect of which is gradually to invest general truths with a sort of majesty, as well as beauty; so that, at length, this new charm rivals and prevails over the graces and attractions of exterior diversity, and imparts more and more force and advantage to that which is occult, until it quite overpowers that which is visible.

Thus it is, that, in the course of philosophical pursuits, abstract principles come forth more into the light—stand out with more distinctness before the mind, and, ere long, the laws which at first were apprehended with some degree of painful effort, occupy it as pleasant and facile matters in the hour of relaxation, as well as engage it in the season of strenuous exertion. At last, whatever is universal prevails altogether over whatever is individual, and the rational faculty, getting released from the disturbance and fascination of things external—accidental—trivial, contemplates with open eye all that is great and permanent.

The whole evidence of our modern physical science serves to establish the belief (a belief in itself highly reasonable) that the mechanical and chemical laws which prevail in our planet, are common to other planets, and to other systems—even the most remote of them; so that, in *this* sense, the inhabitant of any one world would find himself at home in any other: just as the traveller, how

much soever he may be, for a moment, perplexed by diversity of climate, or strangeness of foreign manners, soon confesses that nature and man are essentially the same in the country he has reached, and the country he has left.

But, on the other hand, it cannot well be doubted, that the same principle of inexhaustible variety which, as we see, in our world, throws out so many thousand forms of beauty, has also its full play in other worlds, and takes its range as freely in one district of the universe as in another. If so, it follows that, could we visit and explore other regions, or were permitted to tread the fields of space, and to set foot, as pilgrims, upon distant spheres, each newly discovered world must amaze the eye, by its singular fashion, or peculiar aspect, or particular mould of beauty: each would present its proper and distinguishing *style* of symmetry and colour. Nevertheless, beneath all these diversities, and amid the confusion of these special graces, there would still be couched (as the supposition implies) the few great canons of organic combination; so that each planet of all the skies would at once challenge to itself an individuality, and confess its relationship, or bond of alliance, with all the rest.—

—And who shall duly conceive of that emotion of wonder and pleasure, with which the forms and contrivances of so many dissimilar worlds must present to a rational mind what may well be called the majesty or awful force and sanction of those few canons to which we find submission is made in all regions of the material system? In returning to our abode from an excursion such as we have imagined, the familiar objects that adorn it, ceasing to attract the eye by their individuality, would henceforward stand before us as the mere symbols of the abstract truths that had now gained possession of the mind.

We may safely employ the analogy which we have thus drawn from the material world, and transfer it, with its inferences, to the intellectual and spiritual system. And we institute our parallel as follows :—it is not to be questioned that the laws of the Divine Government (not less than the first principles of the material world) are one and the same in all places of the universe ; for these laws are nothing else than *expressions* of the Eternal Excellence —its goodness, and wisdom, and purity. As in the Supreme Being there is no variableness, so neither can there be contrariety or opposition of purposes within the circle of his administration. Nevertheless, though the laws and ultimate issue of the moral system must be one and unchanging, and must challenge application to all possible causes, yet is it reasonable to believe that the modes under which this one purpose or rule of the divine goverment reaches its accomplishment are as various as the worlds wherein it is taking its course are many. In other words, we are compelled to suppose, on the one hand, that the intelligent universe presents an absolute *unity of principle;* and on the other, that it offers infinite dissimilarities of means and events.—If each sphere or planet has its own physical character—its peculiar fashion and form; so, doubtless, has each family of intelligent beings its special destiny—its single and peculiar history, and its individual round of fortunes. The ways of Him who sits on the throne of universal domination are "a great deep," and of his judgments or dispensations "there is no end."

Now in the very same way that extensive generalization in matters of physical science imparts gradually to universal laws a predominance in the mind over visible appearances and single instances ; so, by an analogy of principle, would an extensive knowledge of the intellectual and

moral system, as it now exists, or has heretofore developed itself, in other worlds, produce a similar prevalence of abstract truths over the impression of particular facts. If a *moral* instead of a *physical* process of generalization could be pursued by the human mind in its passage from system to system; and if it could listen to the history, witness the condition, and learn the destiny, of thousands and thousands again of immortal tribes, whatever was uniform or fixed in the maxims of the divine government, and which presented itself ever and anew in every world, at length, assume to itself a paramount importance, and fill the faculty of rational contemplation almost to the exclusion of lesser objects.

Let it be granted that, for a while—perhaps long—the spirit of the traveller through the universe would be overpowered by its emotions of amazement and curiosity, in contemplating so many diversities of social constitution—so much strange magnificence, so many new forms of greatness or splendour;—the energies—revolutions—adventures of innumerable families. This must be: but it is certain that a mind constituted like that of man, would, at length (if we may so speak) collapse, or fall in upon its centre; it must return, and take up its proper nature—its innate usage of generalization;—it must court the calmness of *reason*, as a relief from the turmoil, and perplexity, and fatigue of looking so much abroad. Then would commence that process of the understanding, which digests and simplifies multifarious objects, and by which the burden and distress of too much variety is relieved. Or perhaps, suddenly, in the full course of eager contemplation, the spirit would be arrested by the thought of the *universal law*, which (amid these changing scenes) was displaying its unchanging force; and, as with an in-

stantaneous revulsion, it would at once pass over from things individual and visible, to things invisible and permanent.

In like manner, as from physical generalization, the beautiful (might we say, awful) simplicity of the material world fills the mind with a calm and elevated pleasure; so, and with much more power, would a similar process, carried on while the moral world at large was passing under the eye, bring in upon the heart those universal principles of the divine government which are the expression of the Divine Nature. These principles would gradually come forth from amid the innumerable instances of their efficiency; they would slowly and silently present themselves in a clearer and still clearer light; they would more and more be disengaged from anomalies or exceptions. The unchanging and unsullied glories of absolute purity, wisdom, and benevolence, would, with an accelerating augmentation, prevail over the glare and show of individual objects. Whatever is limited, partial, temporary, contingent, accidental, must fade and become dim, or take its proper place of comparative insignificance. Meanwhile, though the SUPREME, who dwelleth in light inaccessible, were not visibly revealed, nevertheless his actual presence, as Ruler of all beings, would be declared in the brightness of his attributes; so that the issue of so large a knowledge of the moral and intellectual system must cause, to the rational spirit—a vanishing of the creation, with its diversities, and a manifestation of the Creator in his unchangeable perfections. Or otherwise to express the same thing, that which is "seen and temporal" would be lost in that which is "unseen and eternal."

IX.

THE STATE OF SECLUSION.

"The things that are seen are Temporal."

A GLIMPSE of the immensity of the material system is granted to the eye of man; and the industry of science at once certifies and greatly extends our knowledge of the vastness of the creation. But it is not so with the moral system, of which absolutely nothing is seen beyond the homestead of the human family. And even of that small circle so small a segment comes under the eye of any individual, and there is in what is seen (itself a little portion) so much apparent anomaly, so much confusion, disorder, and variation, that GENERAL PRINCIPLES are almost entirely hidden, or lost among ambiguous instances, and exceptions.

This is so much the fact, that it is not without painful and dubious efforts of abstruse reasoning, that the invariable laws of the moral world, or what may be called the axioms of virtue, are to be gathered, in the way of induction, from the course of human affairs. Thus it is that divine philosophy, though her cause is good, and her argument valid, is driven to plead anxiously for her rights in the world, against the obstreperous voice of passion and interest. Virtue, though reason be at her side, speaks in the tone of the feeble and oppressed, when surrounded by the powerful and the unjust. It is true, that a testimony from heaven has come to sustain the cause of virtue; and yet, even this testimony, this voice from God himself, is

uttered among men, not in peals of thunder, which all must hearken to, but as a whisper in the ears of those who will listen. So it is that those canons, or first principles of the moral system, by which eventually the destinies of all worlds are to be determined, here float about, as matters of speculation and controversy, which now for a moment triumph and prevail; and now again are overborne and discarded.

Were it otherwise, that is to say, were the entire moral system, or a considerable portion of it, always exposed to our inspection, so that universal principles should constantly have that advantage over partial instances, which naturally belongs to them, in that case the dullest mind must admit the inference which would thence accrue in favour of wisdom. The heaviest ear would then be awakened by those sounds, as of thunder, which would assert the unalterable obligations of virtue. A penetrating conviction of the folly and damage of vice must possess itself of every spirit. Our difficult methods of reasoning on questions of right and wrong would be rejected and forgotten; the dim knowledge of duty which now guides us, must fade; the faultering motives of our unstable virtue must be superseded; the slumber of the soul, with all the dreams and fantasies of that slumber, must be broken, and henceforth an incalculable enhancement of the emotions of the moral life (*whether for the better or the worse*) must take place.

A purpose wholly incompatible with any such enhancement or intensity of those emotions, is manifestly to be accomplished in the present state; and this plainly is the reason why no acquaintance with the great world of intelligent and accountable beings can be accorded to man, so long as that purpose remains in suspense. The constant rule of the existing system, the common character of all

its arrangements is this—That an equipoise of motives, a doubtful conflict between antagonist principles shall be maintained. None of the elements of the moral life shall become so far paramount, as absolutely to exclude their opposites. Dispositions are to be formed, tried, and fixed, under circumstances which shall allow no overwhelming force to any one class of inducements; and which shall throw much obscurity over abstract rules, when applied to specific occasions. In a word, a course of probation is to take place, of which it is a necessary condition that Evil shall often present itself under a semblance of Good; and Good, as often, be shrouded under a disguise of Evil; so that an ill choice may become possible to a rational agent, and a right choice be rendered difficult. It is evident that the specific intention of the system under which we are acting would be defeated, or surrendered, if Generalization in matters of morality, could advance so far as to prevail over the immediate impression of particular inducements; or, in other words, if universal principles—eternal truth, stood always in the mental perception *more prominent* than the reasons of each single occasion.

Even if we were ignorant of the actual construction of the material world, we might anticipate that—a moral system such as our being supposed—the scene or theatre of exercise must be a PLACE OF SECLUSION;—a narrow and limited area, shut out from the great world and general assembly of intelligent beings. The probationers, must not see or know *that*, the knowledge of which would at once dissipate the obscurity that invests questions of right and wrong. They may indeed receive a rule of conduct, and they may be coldly informed of the distant consequences of their present course of action; but this information must itself take its place quietly among those reasons that are much more valid than imperative. Fur-

thermore, all free communication must be interdicted between the probationers and those other orders of accountable beings who, from a larger or longer experience, and from, a more extended knowledge of the divine government, might be inclined to use vehement dissuasions, or might even attempt to compel submission to the unalterable laws of that government.—

—Brief intimations may reach the probationers; hints, and warnings, and encouragements may be afforded to them; but no open correspondence must be allowed to be held with the upper world: for such correspondence would at once nullify the conditions of the probationary system.

And are not such, in fact the circumstances of that abode to which the human family is confined? The place of our trial is as effectively a prison, as if our sky were a hemisphere of brass. We may indeed look out freely on every side upon the populous regions of illimitable space; but with the inhabitants of those regions we can hold no parley. Or if we look within the walls, it is still, and it is always true, that "the things eternal," that is to say, *the permanent and universal principles of the moral system*—the constant tendencies and ultimate issues of good and evil, are hidden and unseen; while those things that are for a season—"the things temporal," do, by their irregularities, their complexity, their very insignificance, as well as their obtrusive glare, serve more to conceal than to display—more to confound than to illustrate, the great axioms of eternal virtue. The attractions, the dangers, the urgent interests of the present state, form (may we say) a screen which, with its gaudy and various colours, its painted pomps and trickeries, hangs on every side before the eye of man, encircling his theatre of exercise, and fencing out from his knowledge the great world of intellectual life.

That *the rule of seclusion* is the law of the divine government might be inferred, with some degree of certainty, from what we behold of the actual construction of the material universe. Why is it that the solid framework of nature (the purpose and intention of which can be nothing else than to sustain conscious beings) instead of presenting a continuous surface, that might be traversed from side to side, is actually broken up into innumerable globes: and these globes suspended in the same space at incalculable distances one from another? Why is it that, to obtain standing-room for his intelligent family, the Creator has taken a latitude, a height, a depth, which to created minds is equivalent to absolute infinitude? Why, unless it be to give effect to this necessary law of seclusion and separation? We say that there is seen, legibly inscribed upon the breadth of the midnight skies, a truth succinctly expressed in the words,—"The things eternal (universal) are unseen." And that special arrangement of the material system is peculiarly worthy of notice, which, while all intercourse between neighbouring worlds is effectively prevented, allows the vastness of the creation to be a spectacle to each portion of it. In truth, nothing in physical philosophy is so amazing as the means by which objects, much more remote one from the other than the utmost range of calculation can extend to, are made perceptible one to the other. If the mere greatness of creation is wonderful, there is even a higher, or more superlative wonder, in the fact that this greatness should be cognizable from every point; or that, at any point where a percipient being may have his station, thither, as to a centre, the lines of knowledge should converge, so that the mind of that being should gather to itself true and distinct notices of whatever floats within the immeasurable sphere of stellar light!

And if so amazing an apparatus has been had recourse to for the purpose of conveying to us a knowledge of the greatness of the creation—if God, after extending his productive power incalculably, has superadded to the whole a lustre which exhibits all to all; so likewise he has enabled us, by fair methods of inference and analogy, to attain the belief that all worlds are (like our own) the homes of life and intelligence: and we are then, by the same rules of analogy, led to suppose that the occupants of each of these widely separated spheres are, like ourselves, confined to their several birth-places—are, like ourselves, interdicted correspondence with the universal realm, and denied (as we) the benefit—if indeed, it were a benefit, that might accrue from a more extensive experience than that which belongs to their home history.

This same law of seclusion which we see legibly written upon the material universe, is also carried out through all the arrangements of our own world, and in many modes takes effect, until each individual of mankind is straitened in his sphere, and shut up within a circle exceedingly small; so that if his particular experience be compared with the entire experience, not indeed of the universe, but only of the human race or even of one generation of the race, the disproportion is incalculable; and so it is certainly true to him, that "the things eternal (universal) are unseen;" while the things which he actually beholds are those only that are partial, and "for a season."

To effectuate the purposes of the moral system, and to secure the necessary conditions of the exercise of principles, it is not enough that man should be confined to one world;—he must, within that world, be again and yet again secluded: and this is done by various means; as first—The entire human family is parcelled out *through*

time, by the succession of generations: and as the term of life barely measures two of the periods wherein the race is renovated, each generation knows only its immediate predecessors; and, except so far as tradition and history convey to it (like fragments from a wreck) some loose particulars of the knowledge of the more ancient races of men, each generation, each successive rank, comes forward as a novice upon the stage of life, knowing absolutely nothing of all that is to follow it, and almost nothing of what preceded it. The rolling and swelling flood of human life moves on in billows so brief and proud, that, in rising to the brow of each watery ridge, nothing of the general expanse is beheld;—nothing seen, but the surge and fall of the precursive wave.

Those peculiar physical sentiments that distinguish the several stages of life, or that naturally spring from the circumstances attending each stage greatly intercept the transmission, or natural descent of experience, from one generation to another. The pride and heat of youthful hope render the youth, conscious as he is of vigour, impatient of paternal admonition; and then the pride and shame of the father, whose experience is in fact the history of his own follies, or crimes, again forbid, on his part, a true and candid delivery of the wisdom he has so hardly gained. That knowledge of life which the son receives from his father, is indeed valuable; but it is scarcely more than a grain or two in quantity.

Again, the human race of each generation is divided, and effectively sequestered by—remoteness of geographical position; by antipathy of races; by discordancy of tastes, and modes of life; and, most of all, by diversity of speech. Speech, the prerogative and glory of man, the instrument both of knowledge and virtue, and the principal organ of

advancement in every line, has become jarred by so many discords, that, though it subserves its purposes within particular circles, it utterly refuses to favour universal intercourse; and on the contrary, enhances and perpetuates all those other alienations that spring from remoteness of place, or dissimilarity of habits. It is by language (the very means of communion) that mankind is severed and estranged, and almost as much repelled, one from another, as if they were of different species, or had come together from different worlds. Who would have thought that men—the offspring of one womb, and parted perhaps only by a river or chain of mountains, should ever be reduced to the meagerness of mute signs and gestures!

But the law of seclusion does not here cease to operate.—By the perils, necessities, and straits of ordinary life, by the pressure of every day's burden, by the opposition of private interests, and the contracted motives of selfishness, every man (more or less) has his attention so concentrated upon the small surface of his particular advantages, his hopes and his fears, that he is very far from being a free spectator of that circle or theatre of life which actually comes within his range of observation. As his purposes are partial, so are his habits of contemplation:—he walks in one path, and gathers all the wisdom that he does at all gather, on the narrow line of that one path. Not one man in ten thousand is as wise as the facts he knows, or might know, would make him. Then moreover it is implied in the very supposition of a system wherein many independent impulses are incessantly traversing each other, that each single train of events shall present as much of intricacy, of confusion, and of apparent anomaly, as of order, or abstract principle:—every man, in his private sphere, has to do, not with *the average result* of general rules; but with the

special chances of single throws: the incidents and occasions that come athawrt him, for the trial of his motives, are fortuitous combinations, more than instances that might exemplify any given rule. Every man meets with at least as many exceptions, or seeming exceptions, as cases in point. Much ambiguity attaches to the course of affairs, and ordinarily, that which is most obtrusive, or most importunate, and clamorous, in urging its pretensions, is precisely what ought to be disregarded, and put out of the question of right and wrong. Comparatively few of the matters that come under the hand of man, range themselves clearly beneath general principles. Scarcely does he catch a glimpse, amid every day's hurry and care, of the working of abstract moral laws; but rather is tempted, every hour, to believe that *exceptions*, if not more frequent, are at least more valid than general rules.

The faculty of generalization is indeed given to man; and he has also the propensity to employ it; and there are individuals who, in the exercise of this power, gain acquaintance with whatever is true and permanent: but in looking to the mass of mankind, moral generalization does scarcely more than bud, or give some inert indications of its existence, just as the *chrysalis* does, of the possession of the instincts of its future activity. Every circumstance of vulgar life opposes the disposition of the soul to spring upward, or stretch the wing of meditation towards a higher sphere:—the *smallness* of common affairs, as well as their urgency; their uniformity, or sameness of recurrence; and their multiplicity;—the contaminations of life, and its ridicule also; the absurdity and the folly that infest all parts of human conduct, as well as the abjectness of the miseries that afflict mankind, are all so many causes of depression, or of limitation, that confine man to a

spot on the surface of earth, and hedge about his prospect.

It is true that, in every age, the more intelligent and sagacious portion of mankind has, amid the confusion and ambiguity of the moral system, rightly inferred universal principles: and, with more or less admixture of error, has reached or defined the unalterable canons of virtue. But (revelation apart) the process through which this wisdom was gained has been too abstruse, or difficult, to recommend itself to vulgar minds; and such, conversant always with instances that seem to contradict the rule, have been prone to believe that, to pay homage to ABSTRACT TRUTH, is to worship a powerless or sleeping divinity.

It may perplex us to contemplate the condition of man, as thus conversant as much with the *anomalies* as with the *rules* of the moral system: nevertheless the fact of his being so, whatever purpose it may be destined to fulfil, is manifestly only a part of the universal constitution under the conditions of which, as it seems, the innumerable families of the creation, as well as ourselves, are placed:—if men, individually, are confined to a narrow line of things, and if nations are debarred much intercourse, one with another, and if generations come and pass away with little knowledge of their precursors, and transmitting little of themselves to their successors, all this separation and seclusion is only the ramification of that great principle, which, as we see, has broken up the solid material of the universe into innumerable globules, and has swung each little sphere in the centre of an impassable solitude of space.

But how much soever of ambiguity or confusion may attend universal moral principles, so far as they are to be gathered by each individual from his particular experience, neither those principles, nor the method of establishing

them, are really invalid, or vague.—The true description of them is, that they are at once demonstrable, or certain; but *not obtrusive.* This is the uniform character of every kind of practical or theoretic wisdom in the present state;—it is valid and ascertainable; but not loud or importunate in its mode of challenging attention. Whoever will, may acquaint himself with truth and virtue: but neither truth nor virtue stands on the highway, or forces herself upon the notice of passengers. All this is only in harmony with the apparent intention of the visible world, considered as a frame work for the support of a moral sytem. The very same law which divides the family of God into so many separate communities, imposes (within the circle of each community) a reserve, a silence, upon wisdom and virtue.

Wisdom and virtue calmly utter their maxims: but compel no attention no obedience: they are not trumpet-tongued; neither do they adduce, as they might, in support of their doctrine, the evidence of that great book of facts wherein is written the complete history of man. Let it only be imagined that, in every controversy between the inducements of evil, and the reasons of virtue, there were exhibited to the wavering spirit *all the cases in point*, and all the issues of those cases, that stand upon the faithful records of the human family of all ages. What impetuosity of passion, what audacity, could resist the inference in favour of virtue; or rush upon its guilty pleasures through the crowd of a million of victims? No such force is granted, in the present state, to the reasons of virtue; and, turn which way we will, it is always true, that "The things eternal are unseen—the things that are seen are temporal."

X.

THE LIMITS OF REVELATION.

"And we prophesy in part."

Does then Christianity fall in with the law of reserve and seclusion which, as we see, is inscribed upon the front of the heavens, and which we find to belong to all the arrangements of the present state; or does it stand in contrariety to this great rule: is it in harmony, or out of harmony with the actual constitution of the moral world? Does it come to us (as the maxims of virtue come) unobtrusively, yet validly? Like them, does it speak to those who will listen, and convince those who give it attention; or does it peal as thunder over the heads of men, and compel all to confess its authority?

The question is answered at once by looking to the actual position of Christianity in the world: it convinces and satisfies all who give heed to its evidence: but it leaves at their full liberty all contemners. Nothing is more facile than to remain in ignorance of God's revelation, and under that ignorance to scorn it. This is as easy as to quench the light of natural virtue by a course of profligacy; and to acquire contempt of all goodness, by familiarity with vice.

And if Christianity, like natural morality, may readily be set at nought, so also does it maintain its consistency with the apparent intention of the construction of the material universe, by the parsimony of its revelations;—by abstaining from the conveyance of any particle of

knowledge which is not strictly connected with the interests and motives of *human virtue*. Had it been the contrivance of man, it would assuredly have overstepped this modesty, and have challenged the wonder of mankind by many amazing discoveries of things unseen. Or had it been an accidental lifting of the veil of the hidden world by the wantonness of some supernal hand, it would have indulged human curiosity with flashes or glimpses of things beyond our sphere. But Christianity is a well-digested and premeditated ACT of the Divine government; and therefore maintains strictly the secrecy that sits awful mistress of creation, nor utters a syllable of loose or gratuitous knowledge.

The veil of the Temple of the universal kingdom is not rent—is not raised, by the coming of the Gospel. A voice from behind that veil delivers to men the brief sentences of the Divine will; but neither does the speaker invite interlocution, nor are the things spoken of exhibited:—the messenger from heaven does not abide with us; does not spend his leisure in our company; is not to be surprised by questions of curiosity in moments of complacency: he has imparted that which was to be given—and is gone!

We may, if we please, quarrel with this rigour in the communication of knowledge. How easy would it have been, and how confirmatory too of virtue, to have given us the history of other races, and to have shown, in the story of their destiny, the force and sanction of the unalterable rules of goodness! Yes; but first, let us reprobate that mechanism of the universe which has converted the abodes of intelligent beings into prisons, and encircled each family, as with a rampart of iron and of brass. In the pride of speculation we repudiate Christianity, because,

while professing to come from the Creator of all worlds, it brings us not at all into converse or contact with any world but our own: the Gospel is as contractedly *mundane*, as if its Author had been ignorant of any other sphere than this. Christianity allies itself not at all with the discoveries, and breathes not the spirit of ASTRONOMY.—No. But does not the first and chief inference we derive from the discoveries of this same astronomy impel us to believe that God is now actually dealing with the various tribes of his intelligent family (as well as with ourselves) *apart one from the other?* This very secrecy which so much offends us in the Scriptures, do we not read it in the skies?

Whether we speak of the *Evidence* of the divine original of the Scriptures; or of the moral principles they contain, the same rule holds good, which we have noticed to prevail in reference to the maxims of natural virtue. Those maxims may be ascertained and established on the most satisfactory grounds: but they never obtrude themselves upon our attention; and it is always practicable to pass them by, and go on in contempt of their voice. If it were otherwise; that is to say, if the principles of integrity, of honour, of temperance, of benevolence, were loud and imperious, and were wont to vindicate their authority by instantaneous retributions, falling on the head of every transgressor, there could be no room for the sort of trial human nature is actually undergoing; and no place for *such virtue*, as human virtue is required to be. Space, necessarily, is given to the debauched to make mockery of all goodness, and to call virtue hypocrisy, if the virtuous are to be trained to constancy in adhering to their principles, amid obloquy and contempt.

The same rule demands that, if the calmness and

energy of faith are to be proved, scepticism should have its play, and should be permitted to run its round of scorn without rebuke. This scope given to disbelief, in regard to the truth of revealed religion, is precisely parallel to the scope afforded to profligacy and fraud, in relation to the principles of natural virtue. It is not that these principles are in themselves ambiguous, or unfixed, for the contrary is true: but the *proof* of them, with their sanctions, does not flame out before our eyes, does not ring in our ears; in a word, *is not obtrusive*, and therefore may readily be neglected and forgotten. And so, as to the proof and authority of religion; it is complete; it is irrefragable; it is super-abundant in quantity; it is perfect in quality: but it no more forces itself upon the notice of men, than the magnificence of the midnight skies constrains the vulgar mass of mankind to adore the power and majesty of the Creator. Of the myriads that, at night, are thronging the streets of a populous city, perhaps not more than one in ten thousand ever pauses on his path to read the great lessons of theology that are inscribed upon the skies; nevertheless it is always true, whether that truth be heeded or not, that—"the heavens declare the glory of God." And it is thus that the brighter glories of the Divine Nature are spread forth upon the page of Scripture but they attract only the eye that freely fixes itself upon them; and whoever turns away in listlessness, may do so at his pleasure.

The imperative and overwhelming force that might be brought in upon the side of virtue from an unreserved discovery of things universal and "eternal" is as we see, rigidly denied to man. Nature denies it, by confining him to the acre of earth on which he is born; and Revelation denies it, by the stern reserve, the paucity, and the incom-

pleteness of its communications. This being our actual position (at which it would be at once a folly and an impiety to murmur) there are two courses for our choice; and not only must every man eventually choose between the two; but every man's *present state*, moral and religious, is practically a choice of the one or the other. Before every man, and on his right hand and on his left, thronging, clamorous, and importunate, are the things "seen and temporal;"—those *single* and *insulated facts*, those special and individual occasions, which urge themselves upon his regard; but always with a false argument, because it is a *partial* argument. But there are also, within the knowledge of every man, more or less distinctly, the things "unseen and eternal;"—or those universal and unalterable truths which must, in the end, rule his destiny, for the better or the worse. To follow and to comply with the solicitations of the things "seen and temporal," is, in all cases, and with an infallible certainty, to go on towards damage, overthrow, misery. Nothing can avert the ruin, nothing dissolve the connexion between the course and its issue;—if that course be persisted in.

But on the contrary, to draw our motives from those principles that are universal, "unseen and eternal," is to follow a road which, by a like infallible necessity, leads to perfection and felicity. The line of truth and virtue is always (find it where we may) a line drawn from the circumference to the centre; and to no other centre than that of the Divine Purity and Blessedness. Now the office of Christianity is to supersede the innumerable questions and perplexities that arise (even to the most upright and perspicacious minds) in ascertaining the path of eternal truth. The Scriptures, by a multitude of categorical and intelligible decisions, adapted to all occasions, distinguish between the things seen

and temporal, and those that are unseen and eternal. And to take them always as our directory, is to walk upon a path which, whether rugged or smooth, overshadowed or illuminated, shall bring us at length to immortality and joy.

Holy Scriptures, we say, is an infallible guide towards that which is unseen and eternal. But it would be in no consistency with what we see of the construction of the universe—in none with the actual position of man, such as we feel and know it to be, if it afforded either sensible, or demonstrative proof; or if, in its discoveries, it went at all beyond the line of its immediate purpose. The inspired writers avow the limitation under which they acted—"We know in part," say they, "and we prophesy in part." Noble profession! how well beseeming the true and modest messengers of heaven! How unlike the vain style of imposters!

But it behoves us distinctly to apprehend the import of this apostolic profession: and in doing so, we gain some real aid by turning to contemplate the vastness of the material universe, whence may be drawn an inference highly significant to our purpose. Our modern philosophy establishes incontestably the doctrine, that the material system, whatever may be its extent, or even though it should be deemed to stretch through the infinitude of space, is related in all its parts to the whole; or in other words, that an efficient dependency or correspondence links every globe to its system; and also that every system, or cluster of spheres, is, by the same laws, connected with the great community of worlds, among which it moves, or is suspended. The all-pervading principle of gravitation, the transmission of light, and the traject of comets, are manifest *alliance*, which give oneness, continuity, and relation, to the count-

less assemblage of worlds around us. It is also more than barely probable that there are other, perhaps many other, influences or principles of interaction, which, though absolutely imperceptible to the senses of man, and far remote from the reach of his philosophy, do, as well as gravitation and light, bind together all the solid masses of the universe, and impart to each sphere an agency that extends itself to all others.

Now it follows directly and inevitably from this doctrine of *the unity of the material system*, and of the relation of every part to the whole, that, though the mechanism or constitution of each world or system may be, to a certain extent, understood and explained; that is to say, just so far as its constitution is *private;* there must, in each world, be some elements or some energies, or contrivances, which have relation to the universal system. Besides what might be termed *the local mechanism* of every planet, there must be, in each, the mechanism whereby it is linked to its system, and to the universe. The very statement of this complicated constitution precludes the supposition that *the whole* of the mechanism of any world can be understood by those, how sagacious soever they may be, who are conversant only with that one world. Let philosophy extend itself as widely and as firmly as it may, it can never profess to have divined the entire secrets of the universe. For so much of the visible creation as is within the circle of our observation, may be but a small part of the whole; and therefore must offer to our calculations nothing more than *partial principles.*

The unity of the visible creation—a unity that is demonstrable, carries with it, *a fortiori*, the unity of the intellectual and moral system to which it gives support. Indeed, as the intellectual and moral system is, by congruity

of nature more directly related to the Divine Being, than the material world can be, that very relation to the First Cause of life, and the Centre of government, implies some sort of dependence or correspondence among all the parts: or even if the supposition of an absolute insulation of the several tribes of rational agents could be entertained, our inference would not be destroyed: for the relation of each tribe to the Divine Infinitude in itself implies more of what is incomprehensible and unattainable, than even its relation to the universe of created beings could do.

By the same rule then that, in the physiology of each planet and sun, there must be something *local or private*, and something also that serves as the link of connexion with the rest of the universe; so, in the constitution and history of every family of intelligent beings, there must be found, not merely what belongs to that family singly or individually; but what cements it to the great community of moral agents; and moreover to the Supreme Disposer of all.

Now if there is to be conveyed to some one of these families any portion of those eternal principles that embrace the universe of moral agents, and that take their reason from the constancy and infinitude of the Divine attributes, it is incontestably certain that such revelations can be nothing more than disjoined fragments, or insulated applications of those celestial canons to particular cases. By the very statement, these notices of things eternal are *portions of infinity*, and therefore are never to be comprehended and digested, or reduced to system, until infinity itself has been traversed and described.

And the very same reason which compels us to believe that our own moral system (and every other) has some bond of relationship to the vast whole of the now-existing

universe; demands also our belief that each successive era of the creation has a connexion, of effect and of cause, with the past and the future. Thus, while there may be certain circumstances in the condition of an intelligent and moral community which find their reason in the *present* relation of that race or family to the universal family, there may be other circumstances, affecting it, which are not to be explained without having reference to the most remote transactions (past or future). The infinitude of space, and the infinitude of duration—boundless extent, and unlimited eternity, must both have their share in determining the actual condition of whatever exists in space and time.

What created mind then shall undertake to calculate these two intersecting orbits, or give us the position of our own system upon both? Powers immeasurably greater than those of man must fail here. Created minds—the very highest in excellence and power, must confess themselves always to be mastered by problems like these, that embrace the relations of infinity. This is a knowledge which can belong only to the Infinite Mind.

Yet it is true that some particular bearings of things eternal and infinite, upon things finite, may be expressed, and conveyed by the Supreme Mind, even to inferior orders of intelligent beings. And it is these special relations of the infinite to the finite that will form the principle topic of a Divine Revelation. But need it be said, that such communications must come in the form of categorical affirmations, and can, by no possibility, be given to us in their native magnitude and proportions, as universal truths? The precise sense of the apostolic confession—"we prophesy in part," meets us here: and we must admit, not merely the fact that the Scriptures convey a partial or very limited knowledge of things eternal, or (to vary the phrase)

of the universal government of God; but also acknowledge, that this paucity and limitation is matter of inevitable necessity, arising from the very nature of the case.

If this be the fact, two opposite and very common faults in the treatment given to the Scriptures make themselves apparent. The first is that of the SCEPTICAL EXPOSITOR; the second is that of the SYSTEMATIC, or dogmatical. The practice of the sceptical expositor is precisely parallel to that of a physiologist, who, having made himself well acquainted with the mechanism and laws of his native planet;—its geology, its chemical constitution, and its vegetable and animal organizations, should repudiate or neglect all those more mysterious and inexplicable phenomena which indicate the relation of that planet to the great system of the universe. Or if he did not treat such phenomena with contempt, should persist in the endeavour to explain them in connexion with the private or home economy of earth. On the contrary, he ought always to keep in mind, that this single world is an inconsiderable member only of a system far more extensive than human philosophy can embrace; and that therefore it is probable —nay certain, that the relation of the part to the whole, *overrules* the private mechanism of each planet throughout.

It is thus that the sceptical expositor of Scripture, having gathered to himself (very incorrectly it is probable) a system of divine and moral philosophy, from the homestead of the human family, resolves to receive from God's Revelation not a jot or tittle that does not naturally find a place in some compartment of his mundane science. Whatever, in the Scriptures, seems to pass on elliptically beyond the orbit of our world—whatever stretches itself out to greater dimensions than the human mind can readily

compass—whatever dimly declares the relation of the human system to the universe of moral agents, or to the infinitude of the divine Nature—all such things, because no place or nook can be found for them in the previously-manufactured philosophy, of this *terrene* theologian—because they can be but imperfectly understood, or must be received (if at all) as *bare affirmations*, all these things, we say, he discards and contemns; and in high scorn casts them out for the acceptance of the superstitious vulgar. This is the wisdom of scepticism; and who must not admire it!

The dogmatist, or framer of systematic theology, vehemently denounces the impiety of the sceptic; and seems to take a position at the farthest possible remove from such presumption. *His* presumption is in fact of another sort; but the hypothesis—the false supposition, on which he proceeds is essentially the same as that of the sceptic. Both the dogmatist and the sceptic commence their exposition of Scripture with the assumed principle—'That there *ought* to be nothing in Revelation which may not be exhibited in all the proportions and relations it bears to other parts of our theology.' They are both equally impatient of whatever refuses to go to its destined place in their philosophy: neither the one nor the other can tolerate those seeming anomalies which of necessity present themselves when the bearing of the infinite upon the finite is to be set forth. But the two (though animated by the same spirit of folly) have recourse to opposite means for ridding themselves of the annoyance of what is intractable in Scripture. The sceptic takes the easy course of simply discarding all such materials. The dogmatist, with more reverence indeed, but not more modesty, retains the entire mass of Scripture; but puts in movement the irresistible

engine of his logical apparatus; and nothing can resist the stress and power of this machinery. In fact, absolutely nothing retains its native form after it has passed under the tooth and lever of metaphysical compression. Forth comes orthodox Divinity! not indeed the sublime and mysterious Divinity of the Scriptures;—but that of the Chair.

Meantime, with the modest majesty of Truth, with the awful grandeur that belongs to what is universal and eternal, the Scriptures hold forth their insulated revelations of things necessary to be known, or partly known, by mankind. Silently, yet intelligibly, by their style and method, the inspired writers everywhere profess that they are conveying only some separate elements of Divine Science; and each, in his manner, makes the acknowledgment—"We know in part, and we prophesy in part."

XI.

VASTNESS OF THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE.

"When I consider the Heavens—what is Man?"

An inference, either for the better or the worse, urges itself irresistably upon the mind of man when he contemplates the noctural heavens; and if mere contemplation gives place to the extended knowledge and to the accuracy of conception which are the fruit of science, that inference, whether true or false, is incalculably strengthened in its power over the mind. With an emphasis of meaning it may be said that Night has three daughters—Religion, Superstition, and Atheism.

It much imports us, who adhere to those just and natural impressions which lead the mind from the contemplation of the visible creation to adore the Creator, that we draw our devout inferences in a manner that shall be liable to no reasonable objection; and the more so in the present age, when Atheism is hastening to occupy the ground which Superstition long ago vacated, as if in fear lest Religion should at length come in, and fill the space that rightfully belongs to her.

There can be no doubt that if the understanding of man (as well as his other faculties) were in the state of unimpaired simplicity, the spectacle of the universe would teach him piety, even if he had not learned it in some more direct way. First the exterior magnificence of the skies, so brightly symbolizing as it does the wealth and splendour of Almighty Regal Power, and then those severer calculations and rational conjectures, wherein the mind

penetrates beyond the mere beauty and grandeur of the scene, and eagerly makes its path athwart the unmeasured spaces, and subjoins to what is visible, its own vigorous conceptions of magnitude, number, distance; from both these sources, a mind retaining its integrity, would infer the great truth of the Divine Existence; and its power, and wisdom, and beneficence.

But in the actual state of human nature, wherein the rational faculties are often uncertainly balanced between the most obvious truths, and the most enormous errors, not knowing which to choose, piety must always be first imparted by other means, and the emotions be fixed upon their proper objects, before man is qualified to admit the lesson written upon the skies, and to adore the Creator in the sensible manifestations of his glory.

Piety, we say, *being first imparted*, the spectacle of the material universe must be considered as the principal means available for aiding both the reasoning powers and the imagination, in their painful efforts to conceive worthily of the Divine Nature. Though it be well understood that matter, divisible as it is, and separable into elements, and measurable, can bear no true proportion to that nature which is spiritual, uncaused, and infinite, nevertheless the actual extension of matter through a space whereto no methods of human calculation can give expression, does very sufficiently serve as an *exemplification*, or intelligible display of real infinitude. Effectively, though not strictly, the visible heavens are of infinite magnitude; and they convey therefore to the mind an impression, if not a distinct idea, of absolute infinity, such as otherwise it could never have received. Moreover, the visible infinitude of the heavens is not a vacuum—not a bare abstraction; but on the contrary, is so richly fraught with existences, that

we receive thence at once, and in the closest combination, the ideas of power, and of intelligence, along with the notion of unbounded extension. In this manner, more than one or two of the elements of theology are made ostensible to us; and while we are becoming familiar with them, are learning to pass on with some facility to other, and more abstruse principles of Divine science. It is in this process that "the invisible things of God" are made manifest by "the things that do appear." The nocturnal heavens at once *symbolize* and *demonstrate* the concealed existence and attributes of God, just as the presence and symmetry of a man are made known to a distant spectator, when the shadow of his person, in sharp outline, falls upon a brightly illuminated surface: we see not indeed the man, nor in strictness of argument is it more than his exterior form of which we have direct evidence: nevertheless we do not scruple to fill up in idea what is wanting in formal proof; and we think almost as distinctly of the person as if he stood, without a screen, fronting us in the blaze of light. Thus is it that, both in the *vastness* and in the *richness* of the visible universe, the Invisible God is adumbrated. If the eye be but clear, we can never gaze upon the expanse of stars without descrying, as it were filling all the bright abyss of worlds, the great lines, or contour, of the Supreme Majesty.

This must always be the doctrine derived by sound reason from the spectacle of the universe. But if reason be corrupted and depraved, it brings thence some absurdity, proportioned in folly to the greatness and excellence of the truth it rejects. The ancient prostitution of astronomy to purposes of superstition and of sacerdotal despotism, is a trite subject, not necessary here to be enlarged upon.—Nevertheless, it may just be observed, that the Tsabian

worship of the Asiatic nations was far more in harmony with the proper impulses of the human mind, and did much less violence to the moral constitution of man, than the atheism which, in modern times, has taken its place. And if, in remote ages, the worshippers of the true God were in great peril from the bewitching error which then led captive the mass of mankind, and laid them prostrate at the feet of idols; there is not now a less danger (a danger suited to the spirit of our times) resulting from the impiety of our astronomical and physical sciences.

This impiety assumes two distinct forms; the one bold, the other modest; to both of which a moment's attention is due. Bacon, who originated our modern philosophy, and Newton, who established its authenticity—the two minds that, more than any others, have ruled the world of mind, and ruled it by a just title, both of them believed that they saw the proof of Supreme Intelligence in the construction of the material universe. But it is otherwise with their successors, who have learned to look upon these masters of knowledge with contempt, as having, in childish docility, espoused the vulgar belief of the existence of a Creator. Posterity will give its verdict in this disagreement between our earlier and later philosophers; and will decide on which part the folly actually lies. Meanwhile we have to make an observation (pertinent to our immediate subject) upon this fact of the very prevalent atheism of our modern professors of natural philosophy.

It has been thought by some persons, and acknowledged with uneasiness, (we think a groundless uneasiness,) that the mere fact, that atheism is avowed by men of high intelligence, virtually nullifies, or at least brings under a cloud, the alleged demonstrative force of the two lines of argument—*a priori* and *a posteriori*, in proof of the being

of a God. For (as it is said) if these lines of reasoning were indeed conclusive, and if in the rejection of them there were contained a conspicuous absurdity, they must of necessity preclude dissent; at least among well-informed and intelligent men. But this difficulty will not prove to be substantial. To remove it, we need not insist upon the very fair answer which might be given to it, by saying, that no process of reasoning *of which language is the medium* (in fact none but that which is mathematical) can exert this peremptory power of excluding controversy; because the signs employed, being ambiguous, may always be evaded by sophistry. Instead of urging this reply to the objection, though valid and sufficient, we shall look somewhat more closely to the nature of the case, and in doing so, shall find that the facts resolve themselves into an instance that is not uncommon of mental illusion; and that no real enfeebling of the foundations of religion is implied in the atheism of scientific men.

Those will most readily follow our elucidation of this matter, who themselves are conversant with mathematical or physical studies. We have just above (though for a different purpose) adverted to that insensible process which takes place during the course of philosophical generalizations, and in consequence of which universal laws gain ascendency in the mind, and at length stand out conspicuously in front of the mass or particular instances whence they have sprung; so that, ultimately they assume to themselves a sort of POSITIVE EXISTENCE, almost a personal reality, and come to be thought of as something distinct from the individuality and passiveness of matter. Especially in the regions of the higher mathematics, certain abstruse principles and relations, by the simplifications that result from them, by the facilities which, when once

mastered, they afford; and especially, by the revelations they dimly make of boundless fields investigation—worlds of unexplored mystery, quicken the imagination which, without asking leave of reason, invests them in shadowy majesty, and by a prosopopœia, grants to them something like the graces and dignity of so many divinities.

The now well-ascertained correspondence between the laws of motion and gravitation, and the abstract truths of mathematical science, seems to impart to the latter (especially after they have possessed themselves of the understanding) a sort of domination, or *active efficiency*. And from this prejudice, or illusion, the mind unconsciously slides into the farther error (which it never distinctly examines) of attributing to these universal and eternal truths the prerogatives of Intelligence. The two notions of intelligence and power became so closely associated with certain abstruse mathematical principles, and these principles, in presenting themselves again and again as the RULING CAUSES of all that is taking place in the universe, supplant the higher truth of a FIRST CAUSE, and reconcile the mind (from other motives easily persuaded) to the most enormous of all absurdities—the denial of that truth.

But it is most especially to be noted that this perversion of right reason, how great soever it may be, does not imply that there is no irresistible and invariable impulse in the human mind, obliging it always to look up from effects to causes, and leading it from the contemplation of the universe, to the belief, yes, the persuasion of a First Cause and Intelligent Creator. On the contrary, this primary instinct of reason is as truly at work in the bosom of the the philosophical atheist, as in that of the theologian. But, like every other instinct, it is liable to misdirection, or perverted action. The atheist, let him boast as he may,

though an impious, is not a godless man (for no one can be such); but the deity—the invisible and potent intelligence that floats before him, and which he unnaturally worships, is the system of abstract truth he seems to see sitting mistress of all worlds. Meanwhile the various and highly embellished superstructure of the material world—its multiform provisions—speaking as much of *moral intention*, as of wisdom, and which can be traced to no other cause than Intelligent Beneficence, do not occupy the attention of this mathematical reasoner;—they are in his apprehension only trivial and vulgar adjuncts of the great system of things:—*they belong not to his department;* and he finds no difficulty in rebutting the evidence they afford of a truth to which his own studies do not compel him to assent.

But there is, we have said, a mild and modest form, as well as this bolder one, of that impiety which takes its rise from the circle of our modern astronomy:—and it may be thus described. It admits freely the Divine Existence, and the attributes of wisdom, power, and benevolence: but in musing upon the vastness of the material system—in calculating the incalculable numbers of visible worlds, in adding to those the higher numbers which probably lie quite beyond our prospect; in thus conversing with infinity, and in surcharging the mind with the greatness of nature, man and his destinies disappear, or seem to hide themselves under a veil of utter insignificance. "If, when our eyes are confined to earth, and if, when the pomp of human power and the pride of human knowledge are full in our view, man shows himself to be great, and asserts an immeasurable superiority over the inferior tribes, this exaggerated impression is utterly dispelled when we turn our gaze upward, and bring (as we ought) into our

estimate, the real magnitude of the system in which we are moving. It is then that we are taught to think soberly of ourselves :—It is then that the apparent distance between man—insect as he is, and the insects he proudly tramples on, sinks into nothing ; and we are compelled to confess that no folly can be so enormous as that which attaches any substantial importance to a being that might, with all his millions, be blotted from creation without more loss or notice than is occasioned by the crushing of a moth. If things be so, how preposterous are those religious dogmas which place man in immediate correspondence with the Creator, and imply that the Sovereign Power actually occupies himself with the individual welfare of men ; or that they are destined to act a part that shall make them conspicuous among high and intelligent orders ! What is man," says a reasoner of this class, " what is man, when viewed in his just proportions on the scale of the universe ?"

This mode of thinking is natural, and the pejudice whence it springs is hard to be entirely dislodged from the mind : but it *is* a prejudice ; and it peculiarly infests spirits that are at once meditative, modest, and feeble. Nevertheless its influence is of the most pernicious kind ; nor will religion of any sort (Christianity especially) adhere at all to the heart until the illusion be dissipated.

On which side soever we turn, we may find a direct confutation of this false modesty. It is quite evident that the *whole* (great as it may be) must at length be annihilated or made unimportant, when we annihilate or reduce to insignificance, one by one, its several constituent parts. And the reason which would lead us thus to scorn *one part*, ought to have the same effect in relation to another, and another, until the whole is disposed of. The material universe consists throughout of *portions*, apparently simi-

lar to that on which ourselves are placed: nor is this our world, however diminutive in comparison with the universe immensely diminutive in comparison with other worlds. It is not as if, from our remote and petty globe or islet, we looked up to some central and immeasurable continent of matter, wherewith we could place ourselves in no sort of comparison, and which we might suppose the abode of beings as much more excellent and important than ourselves, as that continent was more vast than this world on which we tread. On the contrary, the greatness of the universe is nothing else than the greatness of *accumulation*. The visible system is indeed immeasurably wide and deep; and it is stocked with innumerable worlds. But (so far as science gives its evidence) the stupendous structure is reared throughout of the same *material*, and consists of parts which bear a relation of symmetry, one to the other.

If, in imagination, we stretch the wing to distant quarters of the realm of nature, and if we take with us the sober expectations which philosophy authenticates, what shall we find—east or west, above or below, but suns and planets, much diversified, no doubt, in figure and constitution; yet nothing more than solid spheres, of measurable diameter, and fraught, like our own, with organization and intelligence. Let us indulge as freely as we choose, in prodigious conceptions of magnitude and splendour; still we must (unless we discard all probability, and all actual appearances) keep within certain bounds. Suns are but suns; planets only planets. This vastness of the universe, therefore, which when thought of collectively, overpowers the mind, reduces itself, when rationally analyzed, to what we have already stated—namely, the greatness of accumulation. Who shall count the stars, or who number the worlds that are revolving around those

centres of light? No one attempts this arithmetic; any more than he sets about to reckon the sands of the shore: but the infinitude of grains makes not each grain either more or less important than it would be, if the number of the whole were much fewer that it is.

And certainly, if our earth may retain its individual importance, notwithstanding the countless infinity of the worlds among which it moves; it may do so notwithstanding its comparative diminutiveness. True, its disk is barely preceptible from planets which, by the breadth of their own, dazzle our sight. But no such rule of valuation can ever be assented to: for it is favoured by no analogy. If the earth is to be deemed insignificant, merely because it is vastly less than Jupiter or Saturn, we ought to judge that Greece, Italy, and England, merit no attention, in comparison with Africa and Asia: and yet in fact it is these petty regions, not the continents adjoining them that have concentrated, successively, the intelligence of the world.

But in looking more narrowly to this prejudice, and in tracing it to its elements, it resolves itself altogether into a natural infirmity of our limited faculties. What then is this conception of vastness, and what is the emotion of sublimity that attends it, and with which we so much please ourselves? It is nothing more, and it is nothing better, than the struggle or agony of the mind under the consciousness of its ignorance, and of its inability to grasp the object of its contemplation. Whatever far surpasses the reach of the intellectual powers, whatever can be conceived of only imperfectly, and vaguely, is thought of as stupendous, sublime, infinite; and while we entertain the ever-swelling, but never perfected idea, an emotion that is partly pleasurable, and partly painful, inflates the bosom.

Now the notion of insignificance, or diminutivenss, though it may seem to be independent of any other, is in fact a correlative of the notion of magnitude. And a mind that had no idea of greatness or sublimity, would never form one of meanness. But as the notion of vastness is directly the offspring of the limitation and feebleness of the human mind, its opposite—the notion of insignificance, has nothing in it of reality: it is an *idolum tribus*, or prejudice which, though common to mankind, is so in consequence of the poverty of the human faculties.

Bnt can we for a moment suppose that the Supreme Intelligence looks abroad upon his works in this manner, as vast in the *whole*, and petty in the *parts*? Does HE know them as we do—a portion perfectly, and the rest vaguely? does HE think of them, in part with ease and familiarity; and in part with labour and difficulty? Does HE see the universe in perspective, as from a central station? Is HE moved as we are, by the conception of the sublime; or does HE, as we, look down at single atoms of the material system, and call them minute, remote, or inconsiderable? Any such supposition as this were most egregious:—on the contrary, we may boldly affirm that as the Divine Knowledge is absolute, and extends itself equally and invariably, over the entire surface, and through all masses of the universe, so it utterly excludes the notion (proper to finite minds) of any part being insignificant and unimportant, in consequence of its disproportion to the immensity of the whole. There is perhaps no instance more striking of the influence of those imbecile conceptions which attach to the human mind, than this notion of the comparative insignificance of the earth, and its inhabitants, because it is a mere point in the vastness of the heavens. The man of frigid and infirm tempera-

ment, who, with an affected or a puling modesty, after gazing upon the sky, turns and contemns his planet, and his species, and says—"What is man, that he should think himself worthy to be noticed, or specially cared for by the Creator?" may on the soundest principles, be charged with making God altogether such a one as himself; the deity he conceives of as finite, not infinite.

If we wanted sensible proof that this prejudice concerning comparative vastness and insignificance, is not at all recognized on high, and enters not into the operative principles of the Creator, we should only have to look beneath us, adown the scale of magnitude. Does it appear then, as if the Divine power and intelligence could please itself only, or deign to be occupied with stupendous masses; and that it holds in contempt the minute? Is it true, or does the microscope give this evidence, that there is only a rude or hurried finishing bestowed upon diminutive beings? Is there found, when we pass from the greater to the less, among organized bodies, a regular decrease of ingenuity, and nicety of workmanship? Every one knows that the contrary is the fact; and every one must confess that this puny supposition of the comparative insignificance of the parts of the material system, is abundantly refuted by the tints and texture of every petal that drinks the dew, and by the wings and antennæ of every gnat that hums in the evening air.

Those who think they discern in the vastness of the material universe a reason which weighs against all religion, and which especialy excludes the belief of the facts affirmed in the Bible, surrender themselves, as we have seen, to one of the most unsubstantial of all the illusions that infest human nature: and as they neglect to observe what is the manifest law of the divine operations in the

organized system—namely, an equable regard to *parts*, and to *beings*, whether small or great; so do they overlook one of the first principles of the sentient and intellectual orders, which is, that no faculties, either of knowledge, or emotion, or action, are bestowed upon any animal but such as have *some direct bearing* upon its own well-being; or upon its destiny in relation to other species of the animated world. When the objector has produced one unquestionable exception to this rule, he will be fairly entitled to maintain his enormous dogma—That the power and propensity of the human mind to contemplate the extent of the universe, and its habitude of referring all things to an Intelligent First Cause, and its constitutional dread of Invisible Power, and its inextinguishable sense of right and wrong, and its inherent forethought of an after life, are all so many vague and inane instincts, which have no more intention, no more ulterior significance, than the chance forms and gigantic figures that are often assumed by the clouds, or seen upon a stained wall. Man, according to these philosophers, is no better than a monster, combining all sorts of powers and means of action; but without any scope for their employment. He has wings, and all the muscular apparatus proper for flight; but his invincible destiny is to crawl upon the ground: he has the interior structure which might enable him to exist in two elements; but he is actually confined to one. To look at his limbs you would say he might outstrip the winds; but watch him, and you find that he is passive and motionless as the oyster. This is, in substance, that natural history of man which the persons we speak of embrace, and which they deem philosophical. Just because the stature of the human species bears an incalculably small proportion to the distance between one star and another,

they conclude that human nature is far too insignificant to allow of its assuming the importance which Christianity assigns to it! To these philosophers it is as nothing that man has mind enough to *conceive* of God, and is actually alive to powerful emotions of which the Supreme Being is the object: all this weighs not with them, and is entitled to no consideration; or, at any rate, cannot compensate in their view, the capital disadvantage of *the diminutiveness of the human form.* If they could visit other regions of the universe, and discover some world, a thousand or ten thousand times more bulky than this, and find upon it intelligent animals, proportionately gigantic, they would then at once grant you that creatures so TALL, might properly challenge for themsleves the right to be immortal and religious; but not so the insect man! This is the real meaning of the sentiment that so powerfully represses the piety of certain persons, who, while with the aid of modern astronomy they contemplate the vast magnitudes and distances of the heavenly bodies, exclaim—'What is man that he should presume to think of God, or hope to be regarded by Him?'

If we reject with scorn all such false and preposterous inferences from the vastness of the stellar system, we are left to seek an inference which reason can assent to as consonant with the known principles of the Divine operations. We have to ask—What is that sentiment which the human mind should imbibe when it stands upon its turret of observation, and looks this way and that, over the resplendent and illimitable fields of space?

Boldly we affirm that earth is not too small a globe to be thought worthy of giving birth to the heirs of immortality. Nor is man too diminutive to hold converse with his Creator, or to be amenable to the Divine government. He

does not therefore arrogate to himself too much importance when he speaks and acts as one who stands in immediate relationship to God. Nevertheless there are principles which should impose upon him a modesty and restraint in the range of his religious speculations. These are plainly such truths as—That the destines of man have *some bearing* upon the welfare of the universe; or are related to its general laws; and that the universe (being so vast as it is) and governed unquestionably by rules which draw their reason not from a part of the system, but from the whole of it, they must always, and especially in the present state, surpass the comprehension of man. In other words, it must be believed, that, in the fate and fortunes of the human race, scope is given to the operation of laws which man must always fail to discern the reason of, since it embraces, or has respect to the immeasurable realm of the Universal King. He alone whose thought grasps all worlds, and all orders of being, and all duration, can digest or comprehend the canons by which all must be governed.

It may be well to pursue in meditation these truths: and to rest upon them awhile, and at leisure; and it must be remembered that the inference we have in view will be equally valid, whether it be assumed *as certain* that the destinies of mankind are related to the universe; or whether it be only granted *as possible*, or in some degree probable, that such a dependence exists. For it is one and the same thing to say—Such and such inexplicable facts *have* a relation to certain unknown principles; or merely that *they may*, for aught we know, have some such relation. In either case the inference stands firm—that we should suspend our judgment of matters which, perhaps, are only to a small extent exposed to our view.

On these premises let the immeasurable extent of the

material system be, for a moment, steadily contemplated; and though vague conceptions may generate emotions of sublimity, the solid fruits of thought will always best spring from the most distinct ideas: but these, on a field so arduous, are not to be obtained without some labour.

That degree of power and facility in conceiving of distance which the mind acquires by its acquaintance with the surface of the earth, may, without any very extreme effort, or at least such an effort as tortures and paralyses the mental faculty, be extended to the distances of the planets of our own system. Not indeed as if even the shortest of these distances could be held before the mind, in its component parts, or correctly reckoned; for if compelled to divide a hundred millions of miles into such portions as we can distinctly think of separately; and then to add part to part, until all were numbered; still retaining hold of our starting point, we should find ourselves utterly exhausted, and breathless, long before one of those millions had been completed. Nevertheless *a mental traject* from world to world, may, in some sort, be accomplished.—The glass brings, for example, the disk of Jupiter before us; so that we may fix the eye on this side, or on the other, of his cloud-belted surface;—we clearly distinguish the forms of these wreaths of lurid vapour; or we catch the transit of one of his moons—follow the speck of shadow in its hasty course along the equator of the stupendous planet, very much in the same way in which we catch the shadow of a cloud, as it moves across the bosom of a distant sunny hill. Although the road thither baffles us in the attempt to mete it out into portions, we can just imagine ourselves to have achieved the passage, and to set foot upon that vast rotund; and can faintly conceive of the scene that would there present itself, where,

athwart prodigious valleys (each capacious enough to receive an Atlantic, or through which the waves of all our oceans might quietly flow, as the Ganges glides in its bed) the deep shadows of the overhanging mountains are flitting with giddy haste, from side to side; while the sun rushes through the ample skies to accomplish his five hours of day. Or we remain at our post of observation through the brief moments of night; and are dizzy while we gaze upon the shining multitude of moons and stars, that bursting up from the horizon, chase each other *with visible celerity* from east to west, like a routed host, hotly followed by the foe.

Thus, and with these aids which the telescope affords us, or which the imagination (authentically informed by facts) supplies, may we make a stage outward through the skies: nor are such efforts of the mind to be accounted vain and fantastic, like those waking dreams wherein we combine extravagant images of things nowhere existing, and in themselves preposterous: for we are now endeavouring to fix the faculty of conception upon objects that are palpable, and real, and which (remote as they may be) are as truly cognizable by the sight as are the cliffs of an adjacent continent. There is no extravagance in this attempt; but a real utility, inasmuch as an important lesson is obtained from the vivid impression of the extent of God's visible dominion. The same force of conception which has carried the mind to the orbit of Jupiter, will transport it to that of Saturn, where is seen a sombre splendour, suffused on all sides, less apparently, from the distant and diminished sun, than from the broad surfaces of the adjacent rings, which almost blend night and day, by overshadowing the one, and illuminating the other. Or taking once again an adventurous flight, further than before, we reach the outer-

most limit of our system, and stand upon that vast and solitary planet which, as if guardian of the whole, slowly walks the rounds of the solar skies, while it fulfils its term of fourscore years and more. The sun has now shrunk almost to a comparison with the stars; or looks like the chiefest and most resplendent of them: so that the mild twilight of that noon does not quite exclude their rival radiance.

Here indeed the power of distant conception of space and distance falters. But if we remain awhile at the remote stage we have reached, and pass along the circuit of that farthest planet of the solar system, we may gain, obscurely, an idea of the solitariness of our system, in the starry heavens. It is possible that the diameter of that orbit, which is scarcely traversed within the longest term of human life, affords just a sensible parallax, for the measurement of the distances of the nearest stars, so that an intelligible means is afforded for computing the breadth of that fearful gulf which divides the sun and his planets from the coasts of other systems. Thus, instead of the ignorance or uncertain conjectures which here on earth oblige us to rest satisfied (or dissatisfied) with a vague conception of the distance of system from system, there, in that Georgian planet, perhaps the astounding reality is reduced to figures; and it is authentically shown that this outer circle of our system, vast as it is, circumscribes a space that would not be discernible otherwise than as a point, from even the nearest of the neighbouring stars: so that though our sun would be seen thence, as those stars are seen by us, the apparent disk of its little sparkling light would include sun and planets together, as one blended radiance. It is thus, where facts are greater far than imagination, that in proportion as we ascertain those facts, or exchange imagina-

tion for knowledge, the mind is so much the more filled with amazement or awe.

From the extreme boundary of the solar system, could we gain that outpost of observation, we should look with more distinctness of perception into the abyss, in the centre of which the sun, with his planets, is suspended. And there, it is probable, a much brighter lustre may shed itself from the starry heavens, and perhaps, (yes it must be believed,) innumerable stars, which from earth are not at all perceptible, or discerned only by the highest powers of art, are individually seen: and those luminous streams too, and many nebulous splendours, which hang as wreaths or folded curtains of light, across our skies, show themselves to be—what they are—crowded hosts of worlds, thick and numberless as the sparks that rush up from a fiercely blown furnace. Perhaps, at the verge of our system, the hours of day may seem dull and sombre; while the night flames out with a radiance that darts from every span and interstice of the sky, like the fretted roof of a palace which the ostentation of the artist has overloaded with sparkling ornaments of gold. Nay, sober truth and calculation oblige us to believe that, if we could reach a spot nearer to the confines of the more densely occupied fields of space, and be exempted from all atmospheric obscurations, the entire surface of heaven would seem to be evenly and thickly studded with the stellar glory, in its many gradations of magnitude; for though the nearer suns would appear distant, one from the other, the spaces between would be filled up by those more remote; and these again by the still more distant, until nothing were discerned but luminous ether;—and yet this ether is luminous only by its innumerable suns!

After the mind has lost itself, and become fatigued by

the labour of attempting to traverse the distances of the visible universe, it may return (not for rest but for change) to the still more astounding conception of the numbers of the heavenly bodies. The telescope has put these numbers quite beyond calculations: and then it fails to give any account of the many luminous lustres that bedeck the sky; much less of the spaces that may be not less replete with creation, on all sides beyond the passage of light. And these numbers, could they be actually expressed, must be multiplied—who shall say how often, to include the bodies, not natively luminous, that are circulating around each sun. Our own system, it is conjectured, may comprise many planets, either too diminutive, or too obscure (from the quality of their elements) to be discerned at all from the earth. The *invisible* material creation, therefore, it is probable, vastly outnumbers the *visible;* and it may justly be thought that the worlds made known to us by their inherent splendour, are, to the unseen, only in the proportion of the chiefs of an army to the thousands that fill rank and file:—it is as if from the summit of a tower we were looking, by night, upon a boundless plain, filled with the array of war; and could discern nothing but the gemmed crests of the captains, gleaming, amid the countless and unseen multitudes they are leading on.

A metaphysical necessity compels us to deny *absolute infinity* to matter: and for the saving of the first principles of theology, we affirm that creation has its limits. But who shall say when, and where, this abstract necessity begins to take effect? A problem like this we must leave untouched; meanwhile the whole evidence of sight, and of science, tends to render it a probable supposition, that that sphere of the universe which the velocity of light brings within our knowledge is a small portion of the

whole; and that the verge of this visible sphere is the verge of another beyond it, or embracing it; and that again of another. Nothing in such suppositions, let them be extended as they may, can be deemed incredible or extravagant, while the inconceivable truth stands always before us of the distances and numbers of the worlds that are actually visible. The demonstrated wonders of astronomy deprive us of the right to affirm that any supposition concerning the greatness of the works of God is too vast to be admitted.

What then is the just and unexceptionable sentiment which should come home to the heart after a contemplation of the inconceivable extent of the Creation? Not, as we have said, this—That man and his welfare are unimportant. The very multiplicity of worlds, instead of favouring such a conclusion, refutes it, by showing that the Creator prefers, as the field of his cares and beneficence, limited and separate portions of matter, rather than immense masses:—it is manifest that the omnipotent Wisdom and Power loves to divide itself upon the individuality of its works.

But if we must not indulge this feeling, the tendency of which is to quash every aspiring thought, and to reduce us from the rank we hold to the level of the brute; our alternative is another, which, without checking any noble emotion, at once imposes a restraint upon presumption, and leads us to estimate more highly the consequences of our present course. Whether then it be positively affirmed that man, in virtue of his moral constitution, stands related to all other parts of the moral system; or it be only admitted as *possible*, that he is so related, it must equally be felt—That to exist at all as a member of so vast an assemblage of beings, to occupy a footing in the universe,

such as it is, involves incalculable probabilities of future good or ill. And then our argument is briefly this;—The material system, so far as it is open to our knowledge, surpasses all power of conception. Yet this immensity is but the immensity of matter; and we know by consciousness of an order of existence incomparably more excellent than matter, even in its most admirable combinations. Is it not probable therefore, not only that this higher order of existence actually spreads itself over the entire surface of the material system; but that it is developing itself in some manner proportionate to its intrinsic superiority and dignity? Is it not probable that events in the universe of mind are moving on—that fortunes are rising and falling—that destinies are bursting forth, blossoming and bearing fruit, which, when known, shall make the material frame-work of nature to appear (great as it is) nothing more than a stage for their accomplishment and display?

Sober reason, in looking abroad upon space and matter, will surely believe that this universe of solid and luminous globes does not stand merely for itself; but rather that it is the inert means of a higher end; and moreover, that this end, or ultimate purpose, must transcend immensely the means. Although therefore we have *ocular* demonstration only of that which is material, we have *rational* demonstration of far more than that; and we may well conjecture that, if the immaterial or intellectual universe, with its destinies, were laid open, the material would shrink and fade, and scarcely again claim our notice.

We have only to add to this reasonable supposition the belief of immortality; or of ENDLESS EXISTENCE, in the most absolute sense of the words; and having placed in combination ideas so vast, it may be inquired whether the

rules or principles upon which a machine so stupendous as the material and intellectual universe, can be supposed to fall within our knowledge; or to lie in the compass of our minds?—In other words, whether our actual qualifications for judging of the destinies of our own species, or of the procedures of the Divine government, are in any degree commensurate with the magnitude of the subject?

Every reflecting mind entertains at times difficulties concerning the condition and destinies of man, which all the ingenuity of philosophy fails to solve. To avoid the stress of such perplexities, on the one side, we are fain to shift our ground; but find that, though we have changed the position of our burden, we have not at all lessened its weight. We run for relief, perhaps, to scepticism, and some run to atheism. But greater and more formidable doubts meet us there; and forbid our progress. Revelation grapples not with any such antagonists; but it speaks in a tone firm and calm, which *implies* that they are, or that they may be, readily disposed of. Now we need wish, if rightly minded, for nothing more (when once convinced that the Bible is from God) than to rest quietly upon its implicit disregard of the doubts which so much disturb our peace. For we may very safely infer from the manifest ease and tranquillity of the messengers of heaven that *all is well*, if looked upon from a point sufficiently high. Just as when a father, stationed on an eminence, is watching the progress of his sons through a labyrinth, they may confidently presume that their course is the right one, so long as they see that a cheerful smile is on his face.

This kind of humble acquiescence is, we say both safe and reasonable. But let it be granted that it is lawful to seek some independent confirmations of our passive

faith. Then surely we may find what we need, as often as we look to the starry heavens. And is there indeed no motive of modesty—is there no reason for suspension of judgment—is there no awe justly to be derived from the spectacle of the universe? Must not even the most audacious mind confess a reverence while standing thus in the open presence of all worlds? Or let the scenery be somewhat changed, and instead of seeing, at a distance, these innumerable habitations, let us imagine that all the rational orders that fill them (not a race excepted) were, by a sovereign summons, gathered from their several homes, and brought down to fill our nearer skies, and to come (were that conceivable) within a circle to which articulate sounds might reach. Who is there then that, in the presence and hearing of such an assembly, would choose to utter aloud the petulance and the impiety of his secret meditations? Who would not be conscious that those complaints against the principles of universal government which he harbours while actually acquainted with only some few of its acts, must, if uttered, bring upon himself the just resentment and scorn of all? But whatever it is that we should not have courage to utter in presence of the assembled rational universe, we ought to expel from the concealed recesses of our hearts. For it is an absurd presumption even to *think* that, which we ourselves feel it to be both presumptous and absurd to utter aloud. The reason of the modesty demanded of us remains always the same; and it is this—That we are members of a government which extends over a surface inconceivably greater than any finite mind can measure, and of which we are acquainted only with a single spot.

XII.

PIETY AND ENERGY.

"Add to your Faith virtue."

ALMOST every excellence in the science of morals has been attained by sages—except completeness and consistency: the completeness and consistency of its morality is the peculiar praise of the ethics which the Bible has taught. Often, if we might so speak, the strength and the materials of six parts of morality have been brought together, wherewith to construct a seventh part; so much of magnificence and elevation has, by this means, been obtained for the single virtue, whether it were fortitude, courage, patriotism, or beneficence, that mankind, in their admiration, have forgotten the cost at which it has been produced.

The morality of the Bible excepted, there has never appeared an ethical system—oriental or western, which might not fairly be described as a splendid enormity—or a glittering fragment, which owed all its value to the spoilation of some spurned and forgotten qualities. Whatever energy has been gained on the one part, will be found to have been deducted from another: or if the man formed on these models is examined, the eminence he displays in a single line of action, impoverishes or enfeebles other of his moral powers.

Every one who is conversant with history will readily call to mind abundant illustrations of our meaning. The ancient world often enough displayed (and in some instances which justly demand admiration) a stern subjugation

of the animal appetites: or an arrogant fortitude; or a proud public virtue; or an ambitious patriotism; or a bland and gay, but dissolute humanity, and a voluptuous elegance. Or after that Christianity had exploded the philosophic and polytheistic virtues, and had imparted the power and solemnity of the future life to ethics, mankind were called upon to admire a new order of extravagance in morals, while saints and anchorets, instead of heroes, sages, and statesmen, ran the course of glory. Meanwhile *the completeness* and *consistency* of true virtue, as taught by the Apostles, was wholly lost sight of.

Our own times, though it be after a new model, have shown us notable examples of the brilliancy and vigour that may belong to partial systems of piety and morals; and we have now as great need as ever, to revert to the source—the only source of a consistent morality. The absolute symmetry, the exact counterpoise of parts, in the apostolic ethics, is sometimes conspicuous, and sometimes occult. In one passage it must insure the notice of the least observant reader: in others it may demand, for its full exhibition, a reference to the deep-seated principles of human nature. But there are no instances more remarkable than those in which the admonitions or dehortations of Scripture are not to be understood in their *specific propriety*, until we have looked through the page of church history, and have found occasions which seem to have been vividly in the prospect of the inspired writers when selecting their emphatic phrases. There are, we say, certain *ethical* portions of the Scripture, which must be granted to have in them much of the prophetical quality; and to which we have not done critical justice until we have shown, by the aid of history, their signal adaptation to the evils that, at different eras, have prevailed in the church.

It must be acknowledged that the Gospel, while by its direct agency it has elevated and purified the morality of mankind, has also, as *an oblique cause*, generated, or brought into activity some peculiar forms of evil. This could not but happen. Christianity (corrupted and debased) has had its specific vices, as well as produced unexampled virtues. But what human sagacity, could be sufficient, while the system was yet in its infancy, and long before it had collapsed upon itself, or had come into contact with foreign influences, to forecast these distant and accidental novelties of sentiment and behaviour? Truly the penetration of men reaches not nearly so far; and when, on the pages of writers so inartificial, so devoid of the keenness and comprehension of the philosophical spirit, as were PETER, JAMES, and JOHN, we find *special provisions* against abuses that were not at all developed till later ages, we must, in all candour, confess, that, though the phrases and the style are those of men, *the latent intention*, and the foreknowledge, must have been from God.

The epistles of Peter eminently exhibit that sort of ostensible consistency of moral precepts, which even the most ordinary understanding perceives, and admires. Moreover this writer shows himself to be master of that practical harmony of principles which, on difficult occasions, and under peculiar excitements, adheres to the nice line of moderation, humility, and firmness. Of this kind are those passages wherein he guides the conduct and feelings of Christians when suffering under persecution. Nothing more admirable than these precepts of meekness and constancy is any where to be found:—nothing so great had been seen in the world before Christ imparted to his disciples the elements of true magnanimity.

But this is not all :—these epistles contain in their ethical portions some extraordinary instances of the kind just above alluded to, wherein a knowledge of the workings of human nature, much more profound than the writer would seem *natively* to be master of, is conjoined with what one is fain to think a *prospective caution*, directed against the corruptions of after Christianity. The exordial paragraph of the second epistle affords a signal example of this, more than human skill and foresight. We venture to affirm that this passage is fraught, at once, with philosophical justness of classification, and with prophetic truth.

It were surely a rude style of exposition to regard the catalogue of virtues, now before us, as merely a vague and fortuitous series of moral qualities, each of which, though singly important, is not specifically linked to its neighbour, and does not derive any definite significance from its location in the list. So clumsy a supposition may perhaps be favoured by the looseness of our English translation ; but in turning to the language of the Apostle, far more of meaning is clearly conveyed, than such a supposition takes account of.

In order to dismiss the frigid interpretation to which our ears have been accustomed, and to convey the full sense of the apostolic language, it is necessary to resort to a paraphrase of the passage. " Divinely endowed," says the Apostle, " with whatever is important to (spiritual) life and piety ; enriched also with those inestimable promises which insure to us a participation in the Divine Nature—a participation we derive from our acquaintance with Him who has challenged us to so high a glory ; and having, by the same means, gained freedom from the defilement of mundane passions, my brethren, take heed (that you

bescem yourselves worthily of your vocation)—using the utmost assiduity (in the pursuit of Christian excellence)—see that your faith (in these promises) is always associated with manly energy or (vigour)—(*that your faith be not pusillanimous*)—and then, that your courage (*virtue*) be duly informed by evangelical principles (*knowledge*). Again, take heed that your knowledge (of the Gospel) be not abused to licentiousness: but rather be united with self-command and temperance. Nor must this control of the appetites spring from a haughty and fanatical temper, but must consist with humility and submission. Yet let your humility be religious (*not stoical*). Then remember that your piety is not to be unsocial (*or anchoretic*) but fraught with brotherly affection; and lastly, that your affection towards your fellow-christians is not to be *sectarian*, but expansive, and that it is to spring from the principle of universal love."*

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* The precise value of the principal terms employed in this remarkable passage it is important to understand: our English version is here less happy and exact than usual.—Σπουδὴν πᾶσαν παρεισενέγκαντες, ἐπιχορηγήσατε . . . . these compounds fully carry the sense of bringing together, or into *combination* and *correspondence*, the several virtues enumerated. It is not merely an adding one to the other, as unconnected *items*; commixture of one ingredient with some other that is specifically necessary for the production of the desired result. The phraseology would be proper if the articles to be brought together were remedies, the effect of which depended upon their due combination. Ἐν τῇ πίστει ὑμῶν τὴν ἀρετὴν . . . . with this faith of yours, admix the constancy and courage of manly vigour: ἀρετὴ has this specific sense. Ἡ γνῶσις is neither human erudition, nor general intelligence; but that specific knowledge of which the Gospel is the subject. Ἐγκράτεια is not moderation in eating and drinking merely; but self-command, or command over the appetites. Ὑπομονὴ, as used by the writers of the New Testament, might be rendered by the word *submissiveness*: or is the patience

This passage then, if not unfairly paraphrased, and if its ellipses are truly supplied, resolves itself into an ethical canon, in three parts, of which the *first* enjoins the due connexion of a religious reliance upon the Divine promises, with energy of character;—an energy that is not to be secular, but evangelical. The *second* describes genuine personal virtue, or *continence*, as related, on the one hand, to the principles whence it should spring; and on the other, to the temper that should attend it. The *third* lays down the twofold rule of social piety.

Or we might well seek our illustration of the apostolic injunction by taking a view, at large, of church history; and then we shall find, beneath the significant phraseology of the passage, a condensed but comprehensive caution against each of those prominent corruptions that have developed themselves in the course of eighteen centuries. They are readily enumerated, and may be thus designated:— 1st, pusillanimous or inert faith: 2d, the licentious abuse of the Gospel; 3d, a fanatical or haughty subjugation of animal desires; 4th, anchoretic pietism; and 5th, sectarian or factious sociality. Thus our apostolic canon is seen to hold up, as in a mirror, the history of the degenerate Christianity of all ages.

We may take the numbers of this canon in their order; and at present consider that which relates to the due combination of faith and manly energy.

There is manifestly something which requires to be

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of humility. Εὐσέβεια, piety. Φιλαδελφία is the *species*; ἀγάπη the *genus*—*This* is the principle; *that*, the special exercise of it: and the caution of the Apostle is directed against such an affection for the brotherhood as does not spring from a genuine and universal love. For the sense of the verb ἐπιχορηγέω, see verse 11.

balanced or adjusted, and kept in equipoise, between the principle of faith, and the principle of action. The one has a tendency to exclude the other; or to overpower it. But Christian excellence consists in the preservation of this balance; and the preservation of it, we must add, greatly depends upon the circumstances of the times.—Now perhaps, for a season, faith and energy are both strongly stimulated; and the highest style of Christian heroism is reached. Again, the inducements of action being slackened, faith is deprived of the invigoration it had received from the contest with its antagonist principle; it triumphs, or rather seems to triumph, for a moment; but presently becomes extravagant; than imbecile; and at length utterly inert. We need not be surprised to find that Faith, though heaven-born, can neither live nor be productive alone. Excellence of all kinds, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, is the product, not of the single operation of some one principle; but of the oppugnant forces of two or more powers, which have *a natural fitness* to counteract each other. And the higher we look in the scale of being and action, so much the more shall we find this principle holding good; and shall perceive that exalted and resplendent qualities have always become what they are, by the vehement interaction of conflicting elements.

The faith of the primitive age owed its vigour, not merely to the miraculous attestations that then abounded; nor to the personal teaching of apostles—the men who had themselves "seen the Lord;" nor merely to the plenitude of that heavenly influence which then so largely descended upon the church; but in an equal degree to the perils and pains of the time—to the agitations, and heavy storms of trouble, which beat upon the infant religion. That

vivid conviction of the reality of things unseen which the first Christians enjoyed, might naturally have abstracted them altogether from mundane interests, and have led them forth, heavenward, in holy contempt of whatever belonged to the insignificance of their mortal course. But this supremacy of the powers of immortality, if unbalanced, must soon (calculating on the constant principles of human nature) have wrought its own decay and corruption; and Christianity would quickly have seemed nothing better than a madness or a folly. The persecutions of the first age constituted the *counteractive power*, which gave consistency and reason to so lively a faith. Christians were daily brought upon a path of danger which made them as much men of action—of promptitude, and of courage, as they were men of meditation. While more than any others they lived in correspondence with things "unseen and eternal," more than any others also, they wrestled with things earthly;—being embarrassed amid common cares, exhausted by hunger, thirst, and toil; distracted by fears; and often actually engaged in encountering the anguish of cruel deaths. Thus were they compelled, by the position they occupied, to mingle with "their faith, virtue."

It might be matter of question whether the laws of the human mind at all admit of a high degree of force being imparted to the principle of faith (consistently with the soundness and vigour of the character) in any manner essentially different from that of a strenuous conflict, such as the first Christians were exposed to. We may perhaps hereafter entertain a conjecture on this subject: meanwhile it must be confessed, that the history of the church exhibits frequent examples of the natural process which takes place when Faith, being released from the

grasp of its antagonist, becomes, first preposterous; then childish; and ere long expires in the arms, either of superstition or of sensuality.

Secular men can scarcely at all conceive of the great power of those motives that are drawn from the objects of religious belief. As the most amazing of all infatuations is that which blinds man to his own immortality; so the greatest of all revulsions is that which takes place when this infatuation is dispelled. Can it be called any thing less than "a new birth" when the being who yesterday was the creature of momentary interests, becomes to-day the claimant of an endless existence—the inheritor of absolute happiness, and an associate of the Infinite Majesty? The power of meditation, apart from piety may indeed, on the boundless field of these hopes, take its course at large. But the faith of Christianity is something far more vivacious than any mere ravishment of the imagination can ever be. It is not so much the idea of *eternity* that constitutes the difference between the secular and the spiritual man; but rather the consciousness and the sensitiveness that are proper to the moral life. It is not a vivid conception of the awful greatness of God that makes the Christian what he is; but the apprehension (an apprehension that has no alliance with the imagination) of the absolute purity, justice, and goodness of the Divine Being. It is the entrance of *these* notions that quickens the soul; it is in their vividness that the life of the soul consists; and the faith of Christianity, far from revelling in gorgeous conceptions of the heavenly splendour and immortal pleasure, is a sense (attended with weeping and joy) of Good and Evil, and of personal implication in the one, and participation of the other.

Nor does this faith want its definite excitements: it is

neither a mere phantasy of future glory, nor a vague ebullition of feeling. The mysteries of the redemption effected by the Son of God concentrate the emotions of fear and hope, of compunction and gratitude, of joy and sorrow, upon distinct objects. The "Mediator between God and man"—his personal qualities, his acts, his purposes, his affection to his people, and the future exertion of his power and grace on their behalf, are so many special sources of emotion, and combine to render—Faith in the Gospel,—a congeries of various sentiments, that may well occupy every faculty of the intellectual and moral nature.

Yet this is not all: for the elementary principle of Faith receives an enrichment, a diversity of colour, and *an individual form*, from its combination with the peculiarities of the mind wherein it lodges. Shall we say, that as, when the pure splendour of the sun falls upon the unequal prism of crystal, it undergoes decomposition, and while losing a portion of its intensity, yet throws off its severed elements of beauty—its seven colours, that diversify all the face of nature; so, when the brightness of the Divine glory, and the unsullied beams of eternal life, come in upon the soul, and are there imbibed, the finite substance, with its limitations of faculty, its personal figure, its individual constitution, imparts diversity to the celestial element, and gives birth to new and special forms of emotion. It is at least certain that the faith of each Christian is a faith which is specifically his own, and takes up, *as adjunctive qualities*, whatever is peculiar to the personal character, and whatever has sprung from its particular history. Thus at once from its objects, and its subject, does Faith derive a copiousness that serves to occupy and animate the soul.

Nevertheless it is a truth which all experience confirms,

that the human mind cannot with impunity surrender itself to the constant domination of *any one class of emotions*, even of the calmest and the purest kind. The perpetuity of a single emotion is insanity;—whether mild or turbulent, melancholic or impetuous; and it may safely be affirmed that human nature must be dissolved to its elements, and reconstructed on a different model, before it can either suffer the wretchedness of incessant passion, or inherit the bliss of perpetual love and joy. The Divine providence speaks this truth aloud by the ordinary course of its dispensations; and indeed by the entire construction of the social system;—an hour only is indulged to contemplation;—*the day* is demanded by care and toil.

There are two notable and ordinary results of that state of things which prevails in tranquil times, when Faith, deprived of the invigorating influence of a strenuous conflict with antagonist forces, takes its residence indolently in the heart of the Christian. The first, is its transmutation into pusillanimous sentiment. The second, is its gradual expulsion by principles of secular action. A period like that in which we live, naturally abounds with instances of both kinds; and a brief consideration of both may well occupy a few moments of our attention.

The unsearchable—the incomprehensible skill of the Divine administration of human affairs is shown in the perfect adaptation of causes belonging entirely to the permanent constitution of nature (*nature, material and intellectual*) to the accomplishment of the purposes of the moral and spiritual system; so that the movements of the *higher economy* of God's government coincide most precisely with those of the lower economy of the natural world. It is not that there are systems of movement—

physical, intellectual, and moral, which are perpetually jostling each other, or which clash whenever they come in contact, and which move on by the one vanquishing the other. But, on the contrary, each of these economies takes its uninterrupted course, as if there were no other moving within the same space; and each finds the means of attaining its ends, without offering the smallest disturbance to the other. All things are physical (using the term in its most extensive meaning) and all things are spiritual, in a not less absolute sense.

A due understanding of this exact coincidence of the several circles of the Divine agency is of no small importance; and to a misunderstanding of it we may trace many of the errors and perplexities that infest the region of religious sentiment. Now in times of action and of peril, the daily experience of the Christian effectively teaches him (far more effectively than can be done by abstract explanations) that the Divine providence, and the spiritual economy, which are the objects of his faith, do not in any wise interfere with the ordinary or physical course of events: in other words, that the latter is not broken in upon, or disturbed (miraculous instances excepted) by the former. With this evidence of experience constantly pressed upon him, his faith ascends into its proper sphere: while he confidently reposes upon the Divine declaration—"That all things shall work together for good to those who love God."

It is possible and probable, that many perplexities may harass the Christian in moments of reflection, while he vainly endeavors to reconcile the combined movements of the natural and spiritual system between which he feels himself to be placed. But though these difficulties may

not be solved by meditation, they are ere long dispelled by the presence of danger, or by the pressure of suffering: he is brought back to the energy and consistency of common sense, and manly courage, by perils that must be warded off; or by pains that must be endured. Meanwhile, the powers of prayer and faith, and all the emotions that belong to a healthy piety, are brought into action; and abstruse difficulties are forgotten.

But it is otherwise in the case of one who, from the commencement to the close of his course, steers his bark upon the bosom of a tranquil sea. No sea indeed, ploughed by the keel of mortality, is exempt from winds and billows. Yet it is a truth that *the ordinary cares* and sorrows of life, though they may oppress the heart, and fill the eyes with tears, do not, in many instances, so quicken the energies of the soul as, to break up its illusions. Just as one who slumbers, may be annoyed by sounds and movements near him, and may turn uneasily from side to side; and often seem as if about to start from his couch; and yet may not be actually awakened. The human mind is prone to rest within the circle of a single order of sentiments:—the soul loves its home of familiar emotions; and will endure a thousand inconveniences rather than consent to be dislodged and driven to seek new quarters. It is thus that, when religious feelings have gained supremacy in the mind, and have come to hold the first place in the heart, the circumstances of an ordinary lot fail to exert any effective antagonist influence, such as shall impart to religious emotions a necessary degree of vigour. The man of faith—sincere and devout as he is, has become exclusively conversant with the movements and principles of that spiritual economy within which all

his hopes circulate. This one order of ideas rules his mind. Meantime he is but confusedly conscious of the vulgar realities of the physical ecomomy, in the midst of which he stands. He can think of its movements only as anomalies, that perplex the spiritual world:—its just demands he resents as importunities:—the irresistible operation of its laws amazes him, as often as he finds himself borne onwards by their power:—he thinks of the world as his enemy, not so much by its corruptions, as by its very constitution: and in imbecile alarm, he betakes himself to the Divine succour, on occasions when nothing is actually to be feared but some just consequence of his own cowardice or indolence.

It is manifest that one who in any degree believes, or who darkly surmises that *the laws of nature*—the very constitutions of the Creator, are so many instances of sedition and anarchy, is altogether unfitted for acting his part in conformity with these laws:—every occasion of life (wherein mere habit and the force of custom and example does not bear him passively onward in the track of common sense) must find him embarrassed, inconstant, pusillanimous; and he fails, and forfeits reputation, from mere incertitude or irresolution; though his principles are as firm as those of a martyr. Meanwhile he is looked upon in contempt by the men of the world, who, understanding nothing of the natural history of the case before them, draw an inference which confirms them immoveably in their irreligion.

The transmutation of religious faith into pusillanimous sentiment, supposes always some degree of natural feebleness of understanding; and we have next to consider that other transmutation which takes place (especially in

tranquil times) in the case of men whose intellectual faculties are vigorous.

Men of energy and intelligence, sincere in their religious convictions (at least at the commencement of their course) who are pressing forward on the busy and gainful paths of public life, soon become far too well acquainted with the principles and machinery of the natural world, and (by their success in adapting themselves to its laws) are too well content with its constitutions to entertain the mystical belief of the religionist, as above described, who can reconcile himself to nothing but what is spiritual; and who thinks nature an invasion upon the economy of grace. These, on the contrary, fully persuaded as they are of the reality, the permanence, and the invariable regularity of the natural world, and yet retaining the dogmas of their religious belief, look upon whatever seems peculiarly to belong to the Divine and spiritual system, as an anomaly, or *special interposition*, brought in on rare occasions, just for the purpose of maintaining piety in the world. Meanwhile, from their own conduct and motives they rigidly exclude whatever is not purely secular.

But when religion has once yielded the supremacy which is its right, it quickly fades into a thin shadow, and a name. These men therefore, of secular habits, and meagre religious belief, insensibly surrender, point after point of their first convictions, until they become in all respects like others:—except the disadvantage of a profession which serves only to overcloud their hours of reflection, and to sully their public conduct. Yet it is such, in an age like our own, that, by tens of thousands, extend the front, and give splendour to the array of visible Christianity. May it not be conjectured that, at the

present moment, where we shall find one man who is both sound-minded and truly spiritual, we shall meet with three pusillanimous religionists, and twenty secular believers?

It may now be curious, and perhaps profitable, to imagine such a course of events as might restore energy to faith :—this subject we shall next pursue.

XIII.

THE LAST CONFLICT OF GREAT PRINCIPLES.

—"*The Son of Man, when he cometh, shall he find Faith on the Earth?*"

THE general expectation of Christians at the present moment, supported by considerable evidence, is, that a wide diffusion and visible triumph of the Gospel draws on apace; and that now, without any new or remarkable pause, truth and piety shall advance—shall receive the homage of larger and larger portions of mankind, until "all the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord."

This, we say, is the common belief of the church and many reasons may be adduced that give strength to so cheering a hope. Nevertheless a contrary opinion may assuredly be entertained; at any rate some advantage may be drawn from following, for a moment (as matter of hypothesis and meditation) such a supposition. We do so therefore, without giving suffrage to the opinion, as if it were more probable than its opposite. But in fact it is only by calm attention to both sides of a doubtful alternative that we can be prepared to rest securely in the one we after all prefer.

A rise and fall, or alteration, of antagonist forces takes its course in all human affairs. History is the narrative of the prevalence, by turns, of the counteractive powers that sway the world; and ordinarily it happens that, at the moment when a certain power reaches the acme of its supremacy, and when, as with a flourish of trumpets, it

proclaims its undisputed triumph, it does, in that very blast of pride, announce the re-appearance of its rival. Despotism, civil and religious, and all the foul forms of political and ecclesiastical corruption, have, on many signal occasions, thus boasted and fallen in one and the same day. And thus too (holding other considerations for awhile in abeyance) it must be granted as possible—That the contest which is now actually taking place on the stage of European affairs, between the principle of religious belief (a belief which, owing to the circumstances of the times is too little energetic) and the secular or atheistical spirit—a spirit of vigour, intelligence, contumacy, and levity; may go on to the advantage of the latter, until its languishing opponent lies in the dust, or is driven into the wilderness. If a better issue may reasonably be hoped for, this, sad as it is, seems to accord naturally enough with the course of recent events.

It is not the argumentative, or documentary proof, which reposes on the shelves of our libraries (how good soever it may be) that will ever effectively maintain the ground of Religion against its adversaries. The Author of Christianity has indeed consigned his doctrine to paper; but the defence and propagation of it is committed, age after age, to living depositaries. Celestial truth is a jewel in a pix; but which, unless it be worn by its possessor, might as well have rested in its quarry. There is a written, and there is a Living Testimony, addressed by Heaven to men. But the former only becomes a passive organ of transmission, whenever the latter fails in energy and purity.—Meanwhile, if the power of religion decays, the power of irreligion does not at the same moment decline; but, on the contrary, starts up then into tenfold activity.

If therefore, at any time, the question be asked—'Is Christianity about to advance, or to recede?' the answer must turn (so far as human probabilities are implied) upon the relative vigour, at the moment, the Living Testimony, and of the spirit of impiety and atheism. If, for example, at any season, while unbelief and irreligion are inert, after a long period of undisturbed empire, the spirit of Religion be gathering to itself inward strength, be rising and mantling in dignity and purity of sentiment, be more sincere and fervent, and more deeply moved, and seem to be mustering force for achievement greater than itself distinctly foresees; then may an expansion of truth be looked for, and an overthrow of the powers of evil.—Such was the relative position of the antagonists in the first age of Christianity; and such again at the bursting forth of the Reformation.

On the contrary, if at any period, the secular spirit be peculiarly rife with intelligence and power; and at the same time the Living Testimony seem to have spent its force;—if, with the faith of Christians, there be combined little of virtue, or manly vigour and constancy; and if, moreover, the Witnesses for God be factiously divided, brother againt brother, then nothing less than some extraordinary interposition from on High will prevent the stronger power from trampling on the weaker. This stands certain without argument.

We do not here either affirm or deny this to be now the relative position of Christianity in Europe: but we go on with our hypothetical meditation, and imagine a triumph of impiety;—a triumph which, even should it actually be in the womb of time, shall endure only for an hour; and it shall be the "Last Hour" of darkness.

The covert scepticism of the eighteenth century, has be-

come open atheism in the nineteenth. It may be hard to determine whether this is a desirable ripening of Evil or not; but on the supposition of the contemporaneous decline of religion, it is peculiarly significant; for we can be at no loss in imagining the scene, when this bolder impiety shall believe itself, at length, free from all constraint and fear. The spread of unbelief, after so signal a restoration of Christianity as we have seen take place in our day, may indeed appear highly improbable. But in truth, if the matter be looked at attentively, we shall be compelled to grant, that the future increase of infidelity *to any extent*, is not a whit more difficult to suppose than *its existence at all* is hard to account for, in an age like our own, when, as matter of argument, it has been beaten from all its positions; and when, after the severest possible contest, Christianity has remained in possession of the whole of its evidence, and has received the benefit of having that evidense purged of dross, and freed from suspicion. On hypothetical grounds it might well have been supposed that the controversies of the last forty years, and the uniform triumphs of Christianity in every contest, must, by this time, have rendered infidelity the object of contempt among all well-informed men. If reason held sway in the world, nothing else could have taken place. But it is otherwise; and if so, then the spread of that which, under such circumstances, dares at all to exist, must not be deemed incredible, or indeed improbable: if it can *live*, it may *grow*.

It is true that, for some time past, atheism has held its place in this, and other European countries, by its sinuosity, its mobility; by its affected modesty, and its graceful evasion of open warfare; and by the malicious courteousness of the obeisance it offers to religion, as if she wished

that her claims should be reverenced, but not examined. Meanwhile it industriously pursues speculations which, though in their apparent tendency they have no bearing upon the question of Christianity, are always brought to a conclusion that silently implies its nullity. By a similar craftiness, an invading or a rebel force, which has again and again been beaten on the fair and broad field of war, holds its existence, year after year, in the bosom of a distracted country. Well knowing its weakness in arms ; and yet relying upon the aid of a disaffected and disloyal faction in the land, it disperses itself through every district ;—is nowhere to be seen in array ; is nowhere to be encountered ; and is not to be destroyed, because not to be met with in the field: yet does it keep alive treason and anarchy through the realm.

Shall we place our reliance upon those bulwarks of religion which the vigilance and munificence of our ancestors reared for its defence, and which we venerate as conservative of all that is most precious ? Alas ! such artificial barriers may disappear more suddenly than the morning mist. Nothing is permanent belonging to man, but his inconstancy. The weeks of one summer—the brief interval between the springing of the blade, and the putting in of the sickle on our fields, may see pass away, as a forgotten dream, what we had believed to stand firm as a mountain. Nor are the means to which recent religious zeal has given existence much more to be trusted, than the venerable institutions of other times. Two powers only are entitled to be considered as grounds of confident calculation, in forecasting future events :—these are, on the one hand, the bad passions of man—his sensuality, his levity, his virulence, his ferocity ; which infallibly, and alike in every age, and in every hour of every age, are in

movement, and actually ready to break forth, and to rage, just so far as they are not repressed. And on the other hand, that strong arm of Divine and conservative Providence, which (governed by reasons inscrutable) now withdraws itself almost from the theatre of human affairs; and now again, with irresistible force, interposes to rescue the ark of Religion, and to renovate the corrupting mass of the human system. These two permanent antagonist powers excepted, nothing that belongs to man is invariable; and at all times, whatever of evil the first of them can produce, may justly be feared—short of that utter desolation which the second will assuredly prevent.

It may most confidently be prognosticated that the atheism which is now bland, submissive, respectful, crafty will become a creature altogether of another temper, should it ever reach the point of supremacy and visible triumph. To all powers it belongs to change their external character, as well as their rate of movement, when they spring up, or burst away from the grasp of an antagonist. So would it be with Christianity;—*so shall it be*, when it gains the ascendant. Nor would the spread of atheism be slow, if a decided advantage were once obtained over religion; nor would its deportment be moderate. If there be an imprudence greater than that of placing reliance upon any existing institutions for the preservation of religion, it is to believe that the suavity, the tolerance, the bland indifference, and the enlightened liberality, which now are the garb of the infidel spirit, *belong to it by nature*, or would be retained a day after it had nothing to fear from its rival.

The whole history of man makes it certain, that sensuality, frivolity, and cupidity (which are the close companions always of atheism) connect themselves with

ferocity, as surely as superstition and fanaticism do so. If false religion has always been sanguinary; so likewise has lust; so has voluptuous levity: so has covetousness: the alliance is deep seated among the very roots of passion in the human heart.

Shall we affirm that none but the priest is by nature persecutor; and that the atheist has no fang? Vain conceit! The priest indeed curses this or that rival sect; and would fain exterminate his foe: but the atheist holds mankind at large in contempt; and would be ready, with a jest, to blot out all life from the world. Besides; as the atheist cannot expunge from human nature its latent instincts of religious fear and hope, these principles will be always at work to trouble his security; and therefore to provoke his resentment. Let but the day come when it shall be fearlessly and commonly professed that "Death is annihilation," and that therefore the pleasures of appetite, graced by intelligence, are the whole portion of man, and this horrible opinion shall quickly become parent to a Giant Cruelty, loftier in stature, and more malign than any the earth has hitherto beheld. Even the most sanguinary superstitions have had some profession of sanctity to maintain; a reserve, a saving hypocrisy, a balance of sentiments, which has set bounds to their demand of blood. But atheism is a simple element: it has no restraining motive; and must act *like itself*, with a dreadful ingenuousness. And with what vehemence of spite shall this monster, should he ever win the sceptre of the world, turn, and search on all sides for the residue of those who, by their testimony in favour of the future life, sicken his gust of pleasure, and make pallid his joyous and florid health.

It were not well (as it is not needful) to imagine in

particulars the ingenuities of brutal rage which, in such an era of triumphant impiety as we are supposing, shall be brought into play by the chiefs of sensuality and atheism, for the purpose of breaking the constancy of the few who shall maintain the faith of religion. With what zeal shall it be attempted to purge the world, once and for ever, of the fear of God, and belief of immortality! The ruling spirit of delusion, the invisible, but inveterate enemy of man—far better taught in the mysteries of the spiritual world than are his agents and ministers on earth, and not free from an appalling forescent of his own near approaching discomfiture, shall nevertheless be so flushed with success (though racked by inward despair) that he shall put in movement the entire force of his kingdom, to bear upon this last hour of conflict. If, when the obsolete and childish fables of the Greek and Roman worship were approaching their fates, the father of error breathed so much of infernal rage into the bosoms of Diocletian and Galerius; and if again, when the decayed follies of Popery were shaking to their fall, he inspired, with a still more intense ferocity, the hearts of Austrian Charles, and of Philip, and of Henry, and his daughter, and of her bishops, how much more shall he be furious, when it is not some single form of impiety that is in peril; but when the great and comprehensive controversy—the question of all ages, between SENSE and FAITH, shall draw to a crisis; and when it shall seem as if now a single convulsive effort might overthrow for ever the belief of immortality. No:—*that* is a triumph which shall never be boasted. Let atheism prevail as it may, some shall remain firm to the hope of life, and loyal to the honour of God. These shall indeed have been long forsaken by multitudes that once made common cause with them.—

The congregation of Christ shall have thinned daily.—The visionary religionist shall have gone out, hand in hand with the wrangler, and the leader of faction. The cloaked hypocrite, the plausible conformist, the sanctimonious, and the rigid, together with the licentious, shall have walked away. Nor must we fail to mention the fattened depredator on the goods of the church, who, at the first alarm—at the first approach of affliction, shall effect his escape, and very quickly will be seen to have taken his place and a sop, as pensioner at the royal table of impiety. Yes, all shall have gone off but the few—learned or ignorant—great or mean, who heretofore had truly held converse with Heaven, and whom Heaven will not forsake. Such shall be strengthened to maintain a good profession. In the day of trouble there shall be added, "to their faith virtue." Faith itself shall reach assurance of things unseen: every misgiving thought shall be scattered; and while it shall seem as if God had indeed withdrawn himself from the earth, the *persuasion* of his presence shall be the most vivid.

As it is true that, in a time of laxity and ease the disruption of Faith and Virtue is the principal occasion of leading men into infidelity, by teaching them to call in question, first their own religion, and then that of their neighbours; so is it found that in, a time of affliction, the invigoration of Faith by Virtue directly operates to augment the number of believers. Thus may we suppose it to be again. Even when the victims are bound, and the fires are kindling, some—perhaps not a few, of those who had thoughtlessly followed in the train of impiety, shall be smitten to the heart, and shall loudly, though at the peril of life profess themselves one with the faithful. The LIVING TESTIMONY shall suddenly revive, and spread

itself, and shall daunt the adversary. The Atheist Power shall quail, and confess his fears—or his incertitude:—and perhaps, at that very moment, when the hostile parties are confronting each other in suspense—yes, in the depth of that "hour of darkness"—at midnight, a cry shall be heard—"Behold the Bridegroom cometh!"

XIV.

LICENTIOUS RELIGIONISM.

"*Add to virtue Knowledge, and to knowledge Temperance.*"

To renounce all energy and consistency of conduct on the plea of Faith, is easy:—and so is it easy to profess and practise secular virtue, in contempt of Faith. These two extremes have in all ages been of common occurrence. But Christianity requires (as it is condensely expressed in the second member of our apostolic canon) that Virtue, or *energy of character*, should spring from evangelical principles; and that these principles, moreover, should insure personal purity, and the government of animal appetites.

The extremes we have mentioned, between which the well instructed Christian holds the mean, are correlatives, directly influencing each other.—It is what they see of the laxity, the imbecility, the instability of many religionists, which indurates secular men in their impiety, and leads them with an avowed contempt of religious principles, to rest the motives of their conduct upon the lower ground of expediency, utility, honour, and a regard to reputation. On the other hand (as there is too much reason too fear) the lax religionist, seeing, as he does, that secular principles often produce a sort of consistency and virtue of which he knows himself to be entirely destitute, and finding that *his doctrine* of faith has no efficiency of a similar kind, arrives tacitly at the conclusion that the honour, truth, integrity, candour, ingenuousness, and self command, in which some worldly men excel, are nothing bet-

ter than "worldly virtues," or false semblances of goodness, with which "a spiritual man" should have little or nothing to do. Thus the secular man is made the more profane by his neighbourhood to the religionist; and the religionist more relaxed, by his contact with the worldling.

The virtue taught by the Apostles, and exemplified also in every age by a good number of ingenuous followers of Christ, is incomparably more *complete*, and more *sound*, and more *animate*, than that of the worldling; because it reaches to the deepest motives—flows out equally from the very centre of the soul, and derives its force always from reasons that are big with the powers of infinity. And then the consistent Christian, when compared, on the other side, with the mere religionist, has a great advantage, inasmuch as the *first* element of his spiritual existence is an unsophisticated perception of the evil of sin, and a sincere belief of the peril that thence accrues to himself; and because its *second* element is an equally unsophisticated and affectionate gratitude to Him to whom he owes deliverance. His nice sense of honour, therefore, draws its acuteness and its vivacity from a perpetual consciousness of the presence of One, whose eye penetrates the spirit, and whose displeasure is the greatest of all evils.

"Add to knowledge temperance:"—or, in other words, let evangelical principles operate to produce self-command, and the due government of animal appetites. The admonition, then, bears directly against that licentious abuse of the Gospel which, to some extent has always accompanied the proclamation of Divine mercy, and which it must be confessed has, in a peculiar degree abounded in modern times.

Those enormities of conduct which, from time to time, connect themselves with religious profession, are not of

any very extensive ill consequence to Christianity, unless they spring, by some mode of theological sophistry, from its capital doctrines. The flagrant vices and gross scandals that may break forth for a moment, and disappear, being rebuked, as by the acclamation of all men, inflict only a transient injury upon the cause of truth. It is otherwise when debauched principles and flagitous practices link themselves, by means of bad logic, with the abstruse points of religion, and gravely demand for themselves the respect that should be paid to well-digested and well-defended systems. In such cases a disease, fatally virulent, touches the vital powers of Christianity, and bespeaks a general corruption, without which the malady could not have advanced so far.

It is characteristic of evils of this order, that they are found to exist, first, in a state of sublimation, or apparent purity; and afterwards, by a very quick transition, in a state of gross deformity and putrescence. We say the one precedes the other: but when produced they continue to be coeval; and are always nearly associated. The false glory of the one, hovers over the foul corruption of the other; just as the decay of animal matter is indicated, during the blackness of night, by a phosphoric corruscation, than which nothing is seemingly more etherial or unsullied. But in the order of generation, we must say (reversing the apostolic phrase), "That which is *first* is spiritual; afterwards that which is natural."

All the laws of the intellectual world must be subverted before it could ever happen that things gross and corrupt should bring into existence things elevated and refined. The reverse is, as we have said, the order of nature. Principles that are recondite, subtile, unearthly, become the germinating causes of flagrant evils, that

appal mankind, and that especially excite wonder on account of their parentage or origin. It follows, if gross corruptions be the product of spiritual errors, that when the process of cure is in question, little good will be effected if, while we attack the offspring, we observe tenderness and reverence toward the parent. This method of procedure must always prove itself nugatory.

To come to the instance before us, of the licentious abuse of evangelical principles.—If the vulgar who, with so greedy a relish of whatever is rank and fleshly, drink in corrupt doctrine, and actually avail themselves of the indulgence that flows from their creed, could be entirely deprived of all the countenance and aid they receive from those of their leaders whose error is altogether of an intellectual kind, and whose conduct is better than their doctrine, they must almost instantly fall back from their standing within the pale of Christianity, and must very quickly merge, without distinction, in the general mass of irreligion. It is to the wily and perverse intelligence, the ingenuity, and *chicane*, the false sublimity and pathos, of a few divine sophists, that the licentious vulgar of the Christian polity owe their very existence, as professors of the Gospel.—Could we but withdraw these leaders, we should at once dissolve the body, at the head of which they stand.

Those thunders of commination which, not unfrequently, roll from orthodox pulpits over the quarters of licentious religionism, die away (for the most part) in fruitless echoes. The spiritual or *intellectual* heretic scorns such rebukes, as calumnious (at least in his own case) while, if listened to at all by the sensual crowd, they are either jeered at, as a proof of ignorance in the mysteries of the Gospel; or they operate directly to cherish and to flatter the capital

delusion of which these persons are the victims. The vindicator of morality has already receded from his vantage ground, and has virtually surrendered the matter in dispute, when he opens the controversy with flagrant offenders against virtue *in a specific style*, which confesses their right to be treated as religionists. By so doing he transfers what belongs immediately to common sense and good feeling, to the hazy ground of polemics. Now the very core and secret of the delusion which envelopes the licentious religionist, is this same habit of escaping from the ground of common sense and conscience, into the mysticism of abstruse and absurd theology. Theology, with its abstractions, does but inflame evils of this order. What have the covetous, or the impure, or the unjust, or the cruel, to do with questions of theoretical religion—questions which divines themselves neither comprehend, nor are able to adjust?

Nevertheless the immoral, to whatever class they may belong, are not to be abandoned to their error; but must, by all means, if possible, be entreated and reclaimed. Some kind of illusion attends always the indulgence of vicious desires; and whatever may be the peculiarity of that illusion, or its strength, it ought never to be deemed indissoluble. The debauched religionist, how deeply soever infatuated, has not, we may be assured, severed himself from the conditions of his moral nature. The heir of a future life, and the subject of Divine government, might as easily lay down, at the last, his immortality, or evade the search of the ministers of Divine justice, as now quench that light of conscience which is the "candle of the Lord" in the bosom of man. Man may indeed render himself brutish; but it is in vain that he would seek to take the rank and destiny of the brute.

We have said that the spiritual or intellectual form of religious corruptions should be first assailed; inasmuch as it is the parent of the gross or flagrant form. This being remembered, we remit, to another occasion, that primary subject, and turn to the secondary; or the considerations of the means to be employed for awakening and reclaiming those of the lower sort, who abuse the Gospel.

It is evident that if a peculiar strength or tenacity belongs to any vicious infatuation, there must be found a proportionate force in the power that assails it. Now it will be granted that, if there be at all such an infatuation, which, more than any other, is firm, even as the thick folds of leviathan, it is the one we have now to do with. Here are men conversant with the purity of the Scriptures, who can persuade themselves that they may draw thence a license for every enormity of the fleshly and malignant passions! Amazing perversity! Who shall deem himself qualified to contend with an error so prodigious? This is not the place for bringing into calculation the irresistible efficacy of the Divine Spirit;—an efficacy *equally indispensable in all cases;* and to which all difficulties are the same: but we are estimating the proportion between the strength of the evil to be assailed, and the power of the *human means*, that are applied to effect its removal.

No argument is needed to prove that, so far as human agency is at all implied, and so far as the wished-for result is dependent upon that agency, a disorder so grievous as the one in question, is not to be subdued by ordinary means. Certainly it will not yield to the efforts of those who themselves are lax and enfeebled in spirit—whose own moral perceptions are obscure—whose hearts are not ingenuous—whose purposes are sinister, and whose conduct is frivolous. Such may indeed vent their spite, or may

display their mastery of language in copious streams of indignant rhetoric; but not a breeze will be stirred by all this eloquence upon the surface of the stagnant pool which we desire to see cleansed. The evil is a substantial one, as well as inveterate; and must be contended with by a power that has in it a proportionate degree of fervour and energy.

The degree of audacity that belongs, at any era, to flagrant abuses within the pale of Christianity, may be assumed as a *datum*, whence to calculate the vigour, integrity, and fervour of the Christian ministry, at the same time. The Christian ministry may fairly be considered as constituting, in every age, the LIVING POWER OF REPROOF, by which the constant tendency of human nature to licentiousness and corruption is to be held in check. This tendency to disorder, and this Power of repression, are antagonist forces, of which the one will rise, as the other falls; or the one recede, as the other advances; and which, therefore, may, in their relative state of exaltation or depression, be taken as means of measurement, the one for the other. For example; do we find an age in which pride, luxuriousness, impurity, rapacity, are suffered to come near to the altar of God, and to receive thence, either by the connivance or timidity of the ministers of that altar, the sacred symbols of the faith?—We have then, unquestionably, found a time in which, though there may be much eloquence in pulpits, much learning, much suavity, and some fair quantity of the higher excellencies of Christian morals, there is little or no energy, or integrity, or simplicity, in the body that wields the Living power of Rebuke.

Whoever then loudly and petulantly complains of the impudent front which religious licentiousness is showing

within his circle, should first be prepared satisfactorily to prove that these disorders (which so much annoy him) do not at all indicate the inefficiency, or the unsoundness of his own mode of contending with them. It is the more necessary to admit impartial examination on such an occasion, because the *actual fault* in every such case is very likely to attach, not specially to the individual; but rather to the general spirit of the body to which he belongs; or to the prevailing style of public instruction in the age; or to the false assumptions, or fanatical dogmas, or metaphysical crudities, of the theological system to which the individual has bowed. Now we may, at any time, find ten men who have discernment and ingenuousness enough to discover and to acknowledge their personal faults; sooner than one man who has the greatness of mind requisite to perceive and confess the faults of the system under which he has been reared, and which he stands pledged to support. This is a point reached only by a high order of intelligence; and therefore attained (spontaneously) only by an exceedingly small number of mankind.

So powerful is the influence of long-existing mental usages, and habits of thought, and forms of expression, that almost any degree of aberration from reason and truth may take place (so that it does but advance upon us gradually) without exciting the attention, even of intelligent minds. Let but a numerous body descend, with a well-timed step, upon an easy declivity, and the lowest depths may be reached before any one pauses to ask—"whither are we tending?" Hence it is that, when at distant intervals, men are sent forth by Heaven to reinstate the church, or to reclaim mankind from general corruptions, they find that the labour of half their allotted term of years hardly suffices to convince their contemporaries (even the reasona-

ble portion of them) that all things are not sound and right.

It appears then, that when we come to ask by what means that corruption and licentiousness which is always apt to prevail within the church may be checked, we are led directly to an inquiry concerning the vigour and efficiency of that Living Power of Rebuke, whence it is to receive its counteraction.

XV.

THE POWER OF REBUKE.

"If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth; and I will make thee unto the people a defenced brazen wall."

It is by the gracious words of Divine Mercy that the hearts of men are to be subdued: these must always be the prime means of affecting and vanquishing the impenitent. The human mind is framed to be influenced far more by hope and tenderness, than by terror and rebuke. This great truth may be assumed as one that is fully established, and universally confessed.

But the Christian ministry includes also an office of commination; and if the messengers of Heaven, when they go forth among outcasts and strangers, who, in utter ignorance of God, have gone far astray from virtue, are to speak much more of mercy than of wrath; it is also true that, when they stand up among those who, being well informed in matters of religion, use the grace of the Gospel to palliate their vices, it is especially the message of wrath, which they are called upon to proclaim. The abusers of the Gospel are not to be treated *as men theologically wrong;* but in the ostensible and common character, of Evil Doers, and open contemners of the awful authority of Heaven.

In what spirit then, and from what inward force shall this difficult duty be discharged—we proceed to inquire. The tendency of the Christian ministry is always to move down from the high and arduous place which belongs to

it, of a Remedial Function, to the lower and more grateful position of an office of delectation ;—either intellectual, or spiritual. Wherever much refinement and good taste prevail, the preacher is likely to become the organ of that species of grave and graceful entertainment which beseems "the Sunday ;" and so long as he keeps in view the rule which, by a tacit compact, he is bound to observe—that of furnishing an hour of pleasurable, meditative excitement; he may take a wide range, as to style and subject :—he may be argumentative or imaginative ; epigrammatic and familiar, or lofty and ornate :—he may assume a low position, or a high one, in theology :—he may be emblematical, or literal ; mystical and profound, or neological and perspicuous : the wide world is all before him, so that he is but skilful in gathering blooming flowers always from the surface over which he passes. But how shall any such honeyed lips utter (except as matters of gorgeous eloquence) the appalling verities of Divine Justice? Nature forbids the incongruity : and more—The Renovating Spirit refuses to yield the energy of His power to the sway of a mere minister of public recreation.

If, as is a far more frequent case, intelligence and taste be wanting in the preacher's circle, he must learn to furnish *spiritual*, instead of intellectual entertainment; such as may be drawn from the conceits and ingenuities of mystic exposition—from the enigmas and tropes of the Rabbinical school ; or from the soothing adulation which, after painting in the brightest colours the honours and privileges of the believer, allows professors of all sorts to appropriate the fulsome description. There may, it is true, be heard from the pulpits of this class of preachers, much louder and more frequent thunders than roll from those of the intellectual class. But the peals of wrath, though

often hoarse, are directed always at some distant adversary;—at opponents of the sect;—or at mankind at large; or at the occupiers of the high seats of secular greatness:—but never, or very rarely, at the impure, the unjust, the rapacious, the malicious, who may be filling the pews around. A vigorous and impartial application of the law of God, backed by its tremendous sanctions, to the conduct and temper of the preacher's audience, would break up his method;—violate his tacit compact, and turn at once the whole tide of his popularity.

The preacher whom we designate *the spiritual* (in the want of a term which might better distinguish him from the intellectual) surrenders his last means of arousing the drowsy, inebriate conscience of the dissolute religionist, when (as often happens) he takes his standing within the line of the old metaphysical theology. Upon that circle of crude and audacious logic, where hoary sophistry sets at defiance Scripture, reason, and charity, even the most ingenious minds quickly lose all their simplicity, and the most sensative all their compunction. To enter this school, where nature is trampled on, and torn, is to lay down humanity; and to take up the most amazing sort of MENTAL INDURATION of which the world has ever seen examples. The assertion may be hazarded, that a long course of profane and reckless sensuality, does not more effectually obliterate from the heart its native awe of the Divine Authority, or its reverence for the justice, sanctity, and power of God, than does a thorough initiation in the brazen abstractions of the antique logical theology. Men and their systems are always to be thought of apart.—A man, when on the ground of his system, is commonly found altogether a different being from what he is on the walks of common life. To-day, and at home, he is per-

haps sensative and kind-hearted :—to-morrow, and in his officials, he speaks of the awful justice of the Supreme, and of its consequences, with the grave indifference, the monotony, and levity, of one who, though he has the human form and tongue, possesses neither conception of what he utters, nor the feelings of our nature.

How strange is the power of accustomed phrases to conceal from the mind the ideas they are intended to convey ! This narcotic reaction of language upon the understanding is, in truth, a disadvantage common to the race, and for which allowance should be made on many particular occasions :—the inward sentiments of men are neither to be condemned, nor approved, in strict accordance with the obvious import of the conventional phrases they employ. Yet does it behove public men to be aware of the indurating effect of words, when digested into constant forms, and when sanctioned by immemorial usage ; and they should continually endeavour to break up, what may be called, the mental incrustations which are always spreading themselves over the sensative surface of the soul. This is most especially necessary in reference to those matters wherein the drowsy formalities of language tend directly to augment that stupifying influence that belongs to all vicious indulgences. A mind already rendered callous by sensuality, receives, every week, a new, and again a new insensibility, from the heavy monotonies of the pulpit. How would both speaker and hearer be startled, if the former were, on a sudden, compelled to pause, and to translate into plain and colloquial terms, the appalling affirmations which have just been gliding unnoticed from his lips !

Nothing (it need hardly be said) is gained on the side

of good morals, when the theological stupor of which we have now spoken, is exchanged for the vehemence of a bad ambition to stimulate, by terrors, the dull ear of the multitude. Nor can we hope any better effect from the rancour of the sincere fanatic—malign spirit! that finds its home, and seems to revel in the awful scenes of future punishment; and coolly drives its car—curious and at ease, through the regions of perdition! Though the instances are rare, there have actually been minds by which the place of retribution has been looked upon as a field of triumph! the lost regarded as fallen foes, who might be trampled on and mocked, and to which the sinner, much rather than sin, is the object of hatred!

It is beneath the roar of some such fanatical rancour, or in sound of the boltless thunders of the mere man of rhetoric, or it is upon the bewitched circle of scholastic theology, that the licentious religionist enjoys his profoundest sleep. All men feel instinctively, that there is nothing of substance, nothing of sincerity, nothing, in a word, which need cause serious alarm, in either the virulence of the one declaimer, or the profundities and sublimities of the other.

Every part of the duty of the minister of religion is more easy than to maintain, in vigour and purity, the spirit he needs as The Reprover of Sin, and guardian of virtue. It is easy to teach the articles of belief, and easy to illustrate the branches of Christian ethics; it is easy to proclaim the Divine mercy: and easy to meet and assuage the fear and sorrows of the feeble and afflicted. But to keep in full activity the Power of Rebuke, demands moral qualities of the rarest sort. It is utterly fruitless to turn from side to side in search of substitutes for these quali-

ties. The preacher may, for example, avail himself of abstract demonstrations, by which to vindicate the unalterable rigour of the Divine government; and he may prove irrefragably, that the Supreme Ruler of the moral system can never pass over transgression; but must needs exact the appointed penalty, either from the transgressor or from his Substitute. The erudite argument, for any substantial effect it will produce, might as well have related to the motions of the planets. Or feeling the incongruity of abstruse reasoning, when addressed to the commonalty of mankind, he musters the means, and brings together all the resources of eloquence. He is, in turns, descriptive, pathetic, indignant; he flames; he weeps; he astounds the hearer, by the prodigious accumulation of his terms and figures of terror. Idle labour! Even while the walls are ringing with these sounds of alarm, the covetous man, in his corner, is mentally counting his gold:—the eye of the vain and prurient is darting from object to object of illicit attraction:—the envious and malign is brooding on new calumnies, to be propagated at the church door:—the ambitious is plotting the destruction of his rival; and the fraudulent and rapacious are, in cogitation, stretching the net for the feet of the unwary. And yet every rule of the most approved systems of rhetoric has been observed; yes, and every intelligent hearer goes away amazed at the skill and power of the preacher: and this preacher too, was sincere in his endeavours!

Ah! but to speak efficaciously of the holiness and justice of Almighty God, and of its future consequences;—to speak in modesty, tenderness, and power, of the approaching doom of the impenitent, is altogether another matter; and one that must be left to those whose spirits

have had much communion with the dread Majesty on high. As the punishment of sin springs, by an ineffable harmony, from the first principles of Divine Nature, and infringes not at all upon Benevolence, so must he who would rightly speak of that punishment, have attained to a far more intimate perception of the coincidence of holiness and love, than language can convey, or than can be made the subject of communication between man and man. This knowledge belongs entirely to the inner circle of the soul, the centre which the rational faculty does but imperfectly penetrate; it is a sense or emotion of the immortal essence: it is conveyed to the spirit by the Father of Spirits; and only conveyed, in any considerable degree, where much meditation, and prayer, and abstraction from earthly passions, opens the way to its reception and entertainment. All other elements of devotional sentiment may lodge in the heart sooner than this. Hence it is that, on this point, more conspicuously than on any other, ordinary teachers are in fault; and not a few, honest to themselves, and abhorrent of pretention or artifice, avoid, almost entirely, a subject on which they feel themselves to be unprepared to speak with feeling and energy.

An indispensable qualification for the vigorous exercise of the Power of Rebuke, by the Christian minister, is such a conviction of the truth of Christianity, as shall render him proof against all assaults from within, and from without. And is there not reason to fear that, in this qualification multitudes of Christian teachers are wanting? Every one who has reflected maturely upon the workings of the human mind, perceives that, whether the fact be confessed or concealed—the stress of the controversy

concerning the divine mission of Christ depends upon the doctrine of future punishment. The affirmations of our Lord and his Apostles on this subject, though they fall in with the smothered forebodings of conscience, in every man's bosom, give a distinct form to apprehensions from which the mind strives, by all means, if possible, to escape; and which it will never cordially admit until the moral faculties be rectified. The quarrel of the world with Christianity comes to its issue upon this doctrine of future retribution. And as often as any mind recedes from the spirituality of its perceptions, it falls back upon this disagreement; and at such times, if the argumentative conviction of the truth of Christianity be imperfect, the darkness and perplexity of scepticism will come in upon the soul like a flood.

While they are meditating, at ease, upon those illuminated scenes of future joy which the Gospel spreads before us, and while we admit, in simplicity of heart, the consolations it affords us amid our present sorrows, we demand with little solicitude the reasons of our faith. Joy and hope are emotions indigenous to the human mind;—they are so because they belong to its original destiny, which was to happiness; and when they enter the soul they bring with them a noble disdain of suspicions. But the very same law of our nature which makes joy and hope spontaneous and unsuspecting, impels us to doubt, when the dark and appalling presentiments of conscience are authenticated. As often as we set foot upon the region which sin has replenished with terrors, we have need of all the strength we can derive from the very firmest convictions.

Fatal to his influence as Reprover of Sin, must be a lurking scepticism in the breast of the public teacher. No care will avail to conceal the inward misgiving of the

mind: the tongue of the speaker will falter; and the reserve—the indecision—the vagueness of his manner; or, still more, his artificial vehemence, will betray the secret of his doubts; and the infection of these doubts will pass into the heart of the hearer, and will serve to harden each transgressor in his impenitence.

But supposing his preliminary convictions to be firm there is then another feeling of which the minister of Religion will find the need, when he labours to affect the hearts of the licentious with fear. It is what may be termed—a resolute LOYALTY to the Divine administration. This sentiment is in some measure distinguishable and separable from those intimate perceptions of which just above we have spoken. It rests upon the rectitude and perspicacity of the understanding;—takes its force from genuine piety, and affection to truth; and is, if we might so speak, a *robust* emotion, less liable to fluctuation than some that are of a more exalted kind. It was in the spirit of this loyalty that the father of the faithful said—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" and in his question assumed the conspicuous certainty of the affirmative. It was in the same spirit that the royal poet uttered his worthy persuasion—"I know, O Lord, that all thy judgments are right." And it was with a similar force of healthy piety that Paul exclaimed—"Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar."

This loyalty will break through the mazes of much sophistry; will support the servant of God in his position, when assailed by more fallacies than he is able at the moment to refute; and will strengthen him to cleave, even under all obloquies and embarrassments, to what he inwardly and firmly knows must, in the end, prove itself the better cause.

Not less necessary to the minister of truth, is an unaffected *sensitive* compassion towards his fellow-men—a compassion of that efficient kind which nothing has ever produced in the world but the Gospel. The servant of heaven can execute his commission only so far as he gains access to the human heart; and there is no other path of access, no other law of affinity, no sympathy, but that of love. The rugged, the severe, the petulant, will in vain arm himself with thunder, or fill his mouth with imprecations;—truth, if indeed he has it on his side, retains neither edge nor temper in his hand. By such stern vindicators of Divine Justice it seems to be forgotten that the special reason why *men* not *angels*, are sent to preach repentance, is, that the proclamation of mercy may always be heard in that tone of tenderness and humiliation which it naturally receives when it issues from the lips of one who himself has sinned, and received pardon. The benevolence of angels, is, no doubt, perfect in its kind; but the compassions of man have a special property, which imparts pathos and persuasion to the awful announcement of God's displeasure against sin. The end of all Reproof is Mercy. If there were no redemption at hand, it were idle, or cruel, to talk of Judgment. But the Reprover is the very same as the herald of peace; and must draw his arguments—whether of terror or entreaty, from his own blended conviction of the certainty of the future punishment, and the reality of the means of escape.

But the expulsion of licentiousness from the Sanctuary of religion, includes other considerations, to which attention may well be given.

XVI.

STRENGTH OF THE POWER OF REBUKE.

"Howbeit, in Understanding, be Men."

CONTEMPT of common sense has been the special characteristic of debauched pietism in every age: hence, of course, an indispensable quality in the Reprover of such evils, is much of that prompt and vigorous intelligence to which the epithet Good Sense is applied.

The mystic sophisms wherein religious profligacy wraps itself are better cut through at once, than removed as if they were entitled to respect. Our Lord, with a vigour and warmth of manner that were unlike his ordinary style, set the pattern of this mode of dealing with dissolute hypocrisy, when he assailed the Jewish doctors and their vicious casuistry. "Fools and blind! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" The whole strain of the Apostolic writings bespeaks the same manly force, in scattering, as at a blow, the pretences of sanctimonious knavery. The method of rabbinical exposition, which consists for the most part in the constructions of evasions whereby the law of God might be made of none effect, and by means of which a corner might be saved for every sin, within the meaning of every prohibition, has been repeated, age after age, with variations. But the masters of the synagogue held their bad honours unrivalled, until, at length, the Jesuit bore away the palm of wicked ingenuity. Yet, even under the hand of the Jesuit, the refinements of hypocrisy did not reach their perfection; and it remained

to be shown that the Spaniard and the Italian might, in this work, be outdone. Both have actually been surpassed by the mystic and debauched antinomian of our day, who has given incomparably more depth and force of colour to the doctrine of pious impurity, than either the Rabbi or the Jesuit had dreamed of.

The strength of the Reformers was precisely the strength of good sense, as opposed to wiles, and doating inanities, and ingenious knavery. In every dispute between them and the Romish doctors, (if we subtract its peculiar terms, and nominal subject,) the real point at issue was the preservation of common sense in the world, or its destruction:—the controversy was between corrupt refinements in the theory and practice of religion, on the one hand; and on the other, the perspicuous demands of right reason. The Reformation was a return of mankind to integrity, and simplicity of understanding, and a rejection of intellectual subtlety, imbecility and fraud.

But the manly vigour of the Reformation spent itself in a century; and there sprung up on all sides, within its circle, various repetitions or revivals of the sacred follies of earlier ages. Some other of these follies may have produced as great, or a greater amount of evil; but not one of them has so much scandalized the Reformation itself, or so much vilified Christianity, or has indicated nearly so fearful an audacity, as that which, by learned argumentation, has taught men that the commands and prohibitions of Scripture are nothing more than mythic revelations of Gospel mysteries, which it would be a childish symplicity to understand in their grammatical sense; and still more absurd practically to regard in that sense.

The angry controversies, with their jargon and empty profundity, which raged in protestant countries at the

time of the Reformation, and downward, though they called upon the stage of the church much intellectual power, transmitted to the next century—not that power (which seemed to have been all spent in the conflict) but what may be termed a preparative of theological perversity which opened the way, or made smooth the path, for the advance of the antinomian heresy. The understandings of the sons, it might be imagined, inherited the exhaustion and the debility which naturally succeeded to the excitement that had maddened the fathers.

Perhaps no occurrence recorded in the history of human nature—none of the ancient whims or enormities of superstition, is more truly amazing than what we have seen take place, during the last seventy years, among ourselves. The case deserves to be distinctly stated in its peculiar circumstances. The English people, compared with their neighbours, may fairly claim the praise of soundness and vigour of understanding, and of much practical deference to truth. The course of events, moreover, has tended in a remarkable degree, both to excite the mental faculties to strenuous exercise, and to bring idle and absurd speculations, of all kinds, into contempt. It is by such a people that the Scriptures are received, and diligently studied. And what is the prominent character of these Sacred Writings? Even if it were granted that, in their mode of revealing certain articles of faith, or in their allusion to subjects of polity and ceremony, such a degree of obscurity attaches to them as calls for industry and learning in the interpreter; it is not less true that, in whatever relates, either to the great principles whence virtue should emanate, or to the detail of virtues and the vices—to the application of general rules to particular relations, or occasions, the inspired writers leave nothing to be desired, or

even imagined, in the way of perspicuity, definitiveness iteration, or diversified expression, and exemplification. Considered merely as a book of morality, the Bible is incomparably a more complete, intelligible, and *popular* Manual, than any other composition. In this respect, though the teacher may find room for the enforcement of rules, he is scarcely at all called upon to exercise his skill as expositor. The Bible, in the plain matters of duty, of temper, and of social behaviour, comes home at once to the understanding of the rudest part of mankind; and is very nearly the same book to the peasant, as to the doctor of divinity. And yet this is the volume which a portion of the most sober people in Europe has actually transmuted into a collection of sacred riddles; and has robbed, in the most absolute manner, of the whole of its force or application, as a divine directory of the conscience and conduct of men! 'The Bible,' said they, 'affirms nothing—or nothing which is significant to Christians, on points of justice, temperance, purity, charity, meekness. Whatever it *seems* to say on these subjects, is in truth (under the guise of a divine trope or apologue) addressed to those who have become spiritually wise to discern the *mystery* beneath the *letter* of the written word.'

This, with the variations, and palliations, and fraudulent subterfuges, is the substance of that delusion which has spread through the religious body in all directions, and has to boast among its adherents, not merely crowds of simple and vulgar, but more than a few of the rich and the educated; and has been defended by erudition and eloquence! Such is the human mind, even when enjoying the most signal advantages, if once it severs itself from common sense, and falls under the influence, either of some dream of intellectual bliss, or of the soft and yet impetuous force of voluptuous desires!

Shall we then labour to dissipate delusions such as these by the method of scholastic argumentation? Shall we be learned and acute in our refutations of them? The man who would proceed in such a manner is simple as a child; or has himself already inhaled a debilitating influence from a poisoned atmosphere. On the ground of theory and speculation, the victims of such errors will be found to have lost irrecoverably the power of distinguishing truth from falsehood: the faculties of the understanding are all in solution, and no longer affect one the other, according to the laws of the rational constitution: the mind does not float on the surface of intelligible notions, where it might be detained, or steered towards the hemisphere of light; but it plunges vaguely hither and thither, in the profoundest depths of night,—to reason and to knowledge it is lost.

Yet, as we have said, Conscience is not extinguished; and a hope of recovery remains with the possibility of suddenly arousing this conservative power by the direct means of applying to each particular instance of immorality the Divine denouncements of future retribution, with all the appalling descriptions which the Scriptures furnish. Experience has abundantly proved that such awakening declarations, when addressed to the untaught profligacy of the mass of mankind, and when accompanied with the exhibition of mercy, have, in innumerable instances, proved efficacious. It is indeed granted that the moral and intellectual condition of the licentious religionist is far more complicated and desperate than that of the ordinary transgressor; yet it must not be deemed absolutely hopeless.

Nevertheless it is manifest that so peculiar an infatuation demands an extraordinary vigour in the instrument employed to effect its removal; and having already advert-

ed to some general causes which tend, either to corroborate or to enfeeble this instrument, we have now to consider some of a more specific kind. Whoever would overthrow subtle casuistry, must be clear from the charge of ever having recourse to it himself. We must know no style but that of intrepid honesty, if we would at all use it with advantage; and we shall fail in the attempt (without suspecting the cause of our own defeat) to speak with firmness and authority, as men, and as the servants of God, to one class of opponents, if, when called upon to address some other class, we find it necessary to descend from that lofty position, and to subtilize, to avail ourselves of the tricks of controversy, to be adroit, disingenuous, ingenious;—to evade conclusive arguments by wit, or violence; and to conceal, beneath a many-coloured cloak of idle declamation, that which, if exposed to view, we should be ashamed to call our own.

The highly difficult work of reclaiming the infatuated religionist demands a simplicity of mind, which must unfit a man for the delicate task of recommending and palliating the dogmas and practices (entire) of a party—let that party be as pure as it may. When, in obedience to certain maxims of policy or *discretion* (which, however learnedly excused, fall immeasurably short of true wisdom) we step forward as the apologists of things that all right-minded men feel (whether they say so or not) to be utterly indefensible, we sever the nerve of our moral and intellectual strength, by the very act. No expectation can be more egregious than that of finding ourselves *men* to-morrow, if we must be sophists to-day. There is a law of continuity, of homogeneity, in the human mind;—there is an equalizing of powers, which makes it take its permanent character from the humiliations to which at any time it

submits, and which demands that it shall go to its place on the scale of dignity and power, not according to the highest elevation it ever reaches, or may aspire to, nor even midway between the highest and the lowest point; but near to lowest. Spontaneously and consciously to submit to degradation, even for an hour, is for ever to be degraded.

We need not then be much amazed if, in looking abroad over the Christian community, we see, in some quarters, the authority of God and the dictates of common sense set at defiance, notwithstanding the faithful, and laborious, and perhaps intelligent endeavours of worthy and able men to put the contumacious to silence. The truth, probably, is that these good and sincere men have surrendered, in some manner, the fulness of their integrity and energy. The evil they are contending with is too ponderous to be moved by the shoulders that are set to it. To-day, you find them zealously protesting against the sophistries of sin; but yesterday, perhaps, they were performing some needful service for the interests of the party they stand connected with; and there is no religious party that has not work to perform in which no man can engage and come forth as he went into it.

It is asked (vauntingly by some persons) "What is the great evil of our religious diversities, seeing that the matters in debate are comparatively unimportant?" Alas! it is this very *non-importance* of the controversies that divide the church, which imparts to them their debilitating influence on the minds of Christians. So long as men disagree on questions of great moment, they will continue to be *men;* though they may be injuriously inflamed. But allow them to divide and to wrangle on trifles, and all infallibly will become frivolous. Nothing can arrest

this consequence.—A century of foolish discord will be found enough to dissipate all the force of mind which the bounty of nature may, in that period, have afforded to the service of the Church.

Let it then be impartially asked, whether the existing divisions which keep asunder the body of true Christians, have not a direct influence in withdrawing from that body *the internal vigour* which should enable it to throw off the enormous evils that infest it.

Bnt there are milder forms of religious laxity, the growth of which demands some notice.

In every religious circle there exists and grows (it is to be feared) a sad amount of immorality in conduct, or temper, under favour of that indefinite, and drowsy mode of enforcing the preceptive part of religion, which is too common. The Law and the Gospel, divinely wedded pair, have been lamentably divorced among us. Under one sacred roof the Commandments are spoken of as if they comprised the whole of God's message to man; while, under another, the Gospel imposes silence upon the Commandments. The result, though different in appearance, is substantially the same:—the hearers in the one case continue in their sins, because they are furnished with none of the motives of spiritual life; and in the other, because they are left to expound the code of Christian duty in their own way; or are allowed to forget it altogether.

It is true, that both these preachers make occasional allusion to the class of truths which each ordinarily neglects. The first speaks of the free provisions of the Gospel very much in the manner of the debtor, who mentions his obligation in the presence of his creditor; or as the culprit speaks of the evidence which convicts him; or as the proud man confesses his dishonour, or the ambitious

man his overthrow. But never does he utter himself *cordially* on subjects of this kind; and never to the smallest discernible good purpose.

And it is much in the same manner that the preacher of grace (too often) while he grants that personal virtue is a proper and indeed necessary accompaniment of faith; and while once and again he declares, that 'holiness should be the fruit of pardon,' makes this declaration the beginning and the ending of his exposition of the ethical portions of the Scriptures. What this 'holiness' implies or contains, none can tell you: or if they can tell, they have not been taught that the parts of it are indispensable to the constitution of the whole; or that it can exist only by the presence of every one of its parts. Even if an indirect inference from the preacher's doctrine does not belie its bald affirmations in favour of virtue, they pass upon the drowsy ear of the sensual, the malignant, or the fraudulent as a mere pulpit usage—an *Amen*, or a *Gloria*, which is to come in at a pause; but which no one heeds.

Truly it is not by the use of certain abstract phrases, just where the symmetry of the discourse may seem to call for them, that the mass of mankind—inert, corrupted, and solicited by bad passions, and bad customs, is to be taught the particulars of morality, of self-command, truth, and justice; or restrained from illicit indulgences. It is not in any such vague and listless style that flagrant offenders are to be put to open shame: it is not thus that secret transgressors are to be brought out from their concealments; nor thus that the wavering purpose of the young is to be determined to the better side, or fortified by the recollection of judgment against the hour of temptation. Nor is it thus, in a word, that a vivid and abiding sense of the awful majesty of God, and of the exact rectitude of

his government, is to be maintained in the minds of the people. There are, it is true, in every congregation, a few individuals—two or three, perhaps, in a hundred, whose private meditations, and whose serious study of the Scriptures, may, in great measure, supply to themselves the deficiencies of public instruction. But it is certain that the morals of the mass of the people will correspond very nearly with what is done by their teachers to inform them in the principles of virtue.

One who is well acquainted with human nature—who knows its infirmity, its inconsistency, its laxity of purpose, its proneness to admit the illusions of passion and self-love, must shudder when he finds in what way certain congregations are entertained, year after year, with topics that scarcely at all affect the conscience: they are made theologians, perhaps; or they are moved to emotion; or they are impelled to take their part in ostensible works of mercy: but "the great matters of the law" are hidden from their eyes; and multitudes, without any deliberate purpose of abusing the grace of God to licentiousness, without any extraordinary impulsion towards vicious practices, slide unconsciously into whatever evil most solicits them;—because their minds are fortified by no explicit warning, and are unfurnished with any *definite principles* of conduct.

We say, a wise and considerate man will be fain to make his escape from such a scene of things, sorrowfully exclaiming—"Surely, THE FEAR OF GOD is not in this place!"

XVII.

THE RECLUSE.

——"*Add to Godliness, Brotherly Kindness.*"

The principle of the Apostolic injunction may be thus expressed—'Genuine piety is *social;* and this social piety is not affection to a party; but universal love!'

There is, perhaps, no order of sentiments which reason cannot approve, and which Christianity condemns, that more strongly recommends itself as innocent and excellent, than that of a secluded meditative piety. We speak not, of course, of the morose and misanthropic spirit of the ascetic; but of that milder sort of anchoretic religion which, without admitting any particle of ill-will towards mankind, leads the subject of it to withdraw himself from society, that he may drink, without interruption, of the still stream of delight that springs from holy contemplation.

The man who tastes, in a high degree, the pleasures of abstracted thought, may perhaps owe to *circumstances* something of the perfection of enjoyment he attains: but he must have received his primary qualifications from nature. There is a serenity—might we say a *lentitude* of the physical temperament;—there is a native translucency of mind;—there is a correct *keeping of time*—a rhythm and melody in the movements of the passions;—there is a steady, tranquil flight of the fancy; and there is a habit of abstraction (not philosophical but imaginative) which, altogether, supply to the mind that combines them a far higher and more constant happiness than is ever, even

under the most favourable circumstances, to be drawn from the ordinary external sources of pleasure. The man of meditation is happy, not for an hour, or a day, but quite round the circle of his years.

As there are powers in human nature—faculties, rational and imaginative, which lie dormant while man continues in a savage state; so is there much in the circle of the tranquil emotions which does not come at all into play, and is absolutely latent, in the bosoms of the mass of mankind. The turbulent and turbid possions, and the urgent solicitudes of the multitude, allow nothing that is not vivid and importunate to gain their attention. And it is so, that the hidden treasures of the soul—the secret delights of the heart, become the unenvied portion of a few meditative spirits. In these, the intellectual life is quick in all its parts. It is as when the waters of a lake are suffered to deposit their feculence, and to become as pure as the ether itself; so that they not only reflect from their surface the splendour of heaven, but allow the curious eye to gaze delighted upon the decorated grottoes and sparkling caverns of the depth beneath.

Or might we say, that the ground of the human heart is thickly fraught with seeds which never germinate under either a wintry, or a too fervent sky: but let the dew come gently on the ground, and let mild suns warm it, and let it be guarded against external rudeness, and we shall see spring up a garden of gaiety and fragrance. The Eden of human nature has indeed long ago been trampled down, and desolated: storms waste it continually:—nevertheless the soil is rich with the germs of its pristine beauty;—all the colours of Paradise are sleeping in the clods: And a little favour, a little protection, a little culture, show what once was there. Or if we look at the

human spirit in its relation to futurity, we shall acknowledge that, as an immortality of joy is its proper destiny, so is it moved by instincts which are the prognostics of eternal life. But earthly passions quench these forescents of happiness: meditation fosters them; and the life of the religious recluse is a delicious anticipation of those pleasures that shall have no end.

Yet may the course of life adopted by the solitary religionist be partially excused on more solid ground.—Self-knowledge is the chief or initial part of true wisdom. But self-knowledge is the result of an analysis that never absolutely reaches simple elements. Let human motives be examined with as much precision as may be, it is natural to them to coalesce, and form new combinations; and this without end:—the work of analysis has always to be renewed, and is never achieved.—Moreover there is a high sensibility of conscience attending the diligent inspection of the heart, which becomes continually more and more exquisite, the more it is exercised: the perception of good and evil acquires a fineness of apprehension—a power of discrimination, such as incites it always to advance and to apply itself anew to every circumstance of the moral life. This vivid and ever-growing sensitiveness therefore, and this power of scrutiny, find full occupation for the meditative spirit, and seem to deny it time or liberty to be engaged with the interest of the common world.

We may advance a step farther.—Religion, or the devotional part of it, is nothing else but the communion of the soul with God; and therefore by its necessary condition is seclusive. There is no piety of a multitude. The worship of a congregation is the worship of so many hearts, each rendered a degree more fervent than otherwise by the power of sympathy. But if the elements of

worship have not been brought together from the depth of individual spirits, they exist not at all. In all true worship, whether the scene be the place of publick convocation, or the closet, the soul brings its immortal substance, and its personal destiny, and its particular interest; its recollections—its hope, and its fears;—yes, itself, as if it were the only created existence, or in oblivion of all others, before the throne of God. How vivid soever may be the emotions, that spring in each heart from its sympathy with others, they can never come into comparison with those that belong to its own ultimate welfare. In the solitude of true worship the human spirit avails itself of, and confesses, two most momentous truths;—first its original homogeneity with the Divine Nature; without which there could be no *communion;* since none but like things can blend: and secondly, the assumption of the human nature by the Divine, in the person of the Son of God; which is the only means and medium of communion between Heaven and earth. Both these ineffable doctrines imply that the soul may approach so near to the Majesty on high as to forget all things but God and itself.

The habit of meditative intercourse with Heaven being once formed, and its expansion also favoured, as we have supposed, by the sensibility of the imagination, there is opened an unbounded field of delicious contemplation, in the natural world. The power and wisdom of the Creator are indeed vaguely discerned, and formally confessed, by ordinary minds, as often as particular specimens of both are produced; but the man addicted to devout meditation, is not only alive to such indications of the Divinity, at all times, and in all places;—he sees in them much more than the bare attribute of which the instance before him yields a proof:—he sees there (if so we might

speak) the entire personality of the Divine Being, with all the glories of his moral attributes; for the habit of his soul forbids that he should think of God at all otherwise than personally. It is not power, and wisdom, and beneficience, *abstractedly*, that are displayed to him in the visible Creation; but rather God himself—his Friend and, Father. Each work of the divine hand is a symbol, indicative of much more than can be rigidly demonstrated by its means. The tones of a voice—a voice familiar—in a perpetual melody, fall upon his ear, as he walks among the creatures; and whatever emotion may be then stirring in the depth of his soul, is ready to be called up by these celestial notes.

And here ought to be noted a peculiarity belonging to the habit of devout meditation upon the scenes of nature; —a peculiarity which in part explains the fondness of religious recluses for wild and desolate regions. There is a purity, or *abstinence*, in the tastes of the man of meditation. He by no means desires to be placed in the midst of the gaudy magnificence of nature, before he can fill his soul with the pious ravishment he delights in. He would not even if he might choose, walk through groves of luscious and spicy pleasure, where every colour and every fragrance satiates the sense. He does not covet, as his home, a valley of the east, where the sun seems to linger and shed all his favours. On the contrary, he would much rather draw his devout inferences from the slenderest or most modest examples: he choses to dwell upon instances wherein the parsimony of nature gives the larger space to the diligence of rflection; and where the premises are always less obtrusive than the conclusion. Yes, it is most true, that the pious contemplatist finds, in the sear herbage of the wilderness, and finds, on the rugged

and scorched surface of granite rocks, symbols enough of God; and he thinks himself richly furnished with book, and lesson, and teacher, when he descries on his solitary way, only a blade of grass!

Or even if the prospect on earth be absolutely void of life; the skies are still open to the gaze of the recluse; and are they not laid open for his peculiar benefit? who but himself draws thence the principles of divine philosophy? who else renders back, as he does, the tribute of praise due to the Infinite Architect? The crowd of men see not God in the stars; and hold back the revenue of deserved adoration which the heavens challenge for their Maker. But the meditative man separates himself from the world that he may discharge this duty, and perform, on the behalf of others, the office they neglect. The mass of men could hardly be more sordid than they are, hardly more reluctant to admit ideas of greatness and power, hardly more dull and gross, if a perpetual screen of vapours concealed entirely from our knowledge the splendour of the universe.

The transition is easy from the brightness and extent of the visible heavens, to the magnificence and stately array of the invisible world—the intelligent progeny of the Universal Father. The conceits of a puerile fancy excluded, and nothing assumed which the severest reason ought to condemn, or which Scripture does not authenticate, the meditative mind readily finds a range of thought in this region, such as may at least compensate for the absence of all the earthly pomps which empires might bring together.

Nor must it be forgotten that there are circumstances of a humiliating kind in the actual condition of man, which tend greatly to enhance the pleasures of the solitary life,

or to corroborate the purpose of the recluse in his separation from the world.—By the very constitution of human nature a contrariety exists between the principles of the higher and lower life—the intellectual and the animal, which, though it may be gracefully concealed by elegance of manners, and the artificial modes of civilized life, is never absolutely reconciled, and presses always as an annoyance and a burden upon the high-wrought sensibilities of serious meditative minds. The susceptibility of such minds and their want of active energy, expose them painfully to this uneasiness. Nor can they avail themselves of the aid which, in the gay and busy world, is supplied by levity and joyousness and the velocity of affairs. It is not so much the pains, and wants, and heavier woes of our corporeal nature, as its *humiliations*, which afflict the sensitive recluse. On *his* principles and with *his* habits of feeling, he can be far happier amidst sufferings and necessities, than when solicited and disturbed by trivial cares, or ignoble occupations. For the former impel and aid him to abstract himself, more and more, from the body:—the latter, against all his tastes, implicate him in its meanness.

To hide himself from the world, is not, it is true, to escape from the humiliations of the body: nevertheless it is to be exempt from all but those of *his own*:—it is to be free from the annoyance and the disgusts of that vulgarity which, in the world, obtrudes whatever is fleshly upon observation. The recluse, if at any time he be exposed to the grossness, the frivolity, or the petulant selfishness of common life, recoils with impatience; and, with an eager preference, embraces anew the immunities and calm delights of his cell. *There*, almost forgetting that he is a tenant of mortality, he converses with perfection and infinitude. Safe—safe, with the pleasures of meditation all

his own—pleasures of which none can deprive him; he is indifferent to all things else;—a dungeon, or a desert, is to him a paradise.

A sensibility too highly excited, and which has become too much the habit of the mind, distinguishes the recluse; and this again impels him, with an inconsistency he cannot justify, to hide himself from the crowd of men, and even to get absolution from the ties of private affection: for it is thus only that he can be exempt from the pains of excessive sympathy. Hence it happens that the very man whose firm persuasion of things invisible might well give him serenity amid the vicissitudes of the present life, exhibits far less composure than those often do who, when they lose wealth, and friends, and reputation, lose absolutely all which they have ever thought of, or desired.

But perhaps there is nothing which so much determines the man of meditation in his purpose of hiding himself in solitude, as that spirit of rude intrusiveness, of intolerance, and of dogmatism, which prevails in the world, and which, moreover, seems often to draw around the inoffensive and modest, and to make such their sport and victim. It is the peculiar delight of vulgar arrogance, not merely to violate the substantial rights of those who are feeble and unarmed; but to carry their practice of invasion—if it be possible, into the very souls of men. To rule in the visible and tangible world is not enough:—the despot must sway the private sentiments, and disturb the meditations of all who dare not repel his usurpations. The most innocent tastes are regarded as matters of personal quarrel, by the obstreperous tyrant—"While you cloak your thoughts, I assume that you are harbouring the purpose of resistance to my will. When you express them, you openly defy my power." This is the real meaning

of the language of arrogant and overbearing tempers. What wonder is it if the meek and modest should escape, when they can, from the circle of such tyranny; or that when so escaped, their hearts should passionately cleave to the freedom of the monastic life?

A feeling very similar to this is common even to men of far more intellectual vigor than we attribute to the Recluse; and actually exerts a great influence over the manners and habits of some of the most superior minds. Such are compelled to confess that it is only within the sanctuary of their own bosoms they can enjoy free converse with Truth and Reason. The open world is too impatient, too wilful, too capricious, and too intolerant, to give place to the liberty in which Truth and Reason delight. In the very choicest society there is not enough of simplicity not enough of integrity, not candour, not knowledge, nor perspicuity enough, to allow scope for an unanxious expression and copious interchange of thought. There are truths, or we should say there are indications of truth, which are not to be entertained without much delicacy of handling. Bring them into dispute—haul them forth upon the arena of controversy, and they vanish from the sight. It is far from being an axiom that, whatever is true or important, or in a degree intelligible, may be brought out and submitted to the judgment of any sort of minds. The very reverse is often the fact. Beyond the bounded circle of things which may be measured on all sides, and categorically spoken of, and which from the homestead of minds of little leisure or comprehension; there is a wide and uncircumscribed sphere wherein spirits excursive, and philosophically modest, take their range; and whence they bring home, if not certain and irrefragable conclusions, at least scattered particles of

wisdom, which they more highly esteem than all the stamped coinage whereof dogmatism makes its boast. It is precisely *to save* these elements of imperfect knowledge, that the man of comprehensive mind often hides himself in silence, or withdraws altogether from society.

If the characteristic difference between strong and feeble minds were asked for, it might be replied—it is found in the habit (in the former case) of adhering firmly to truths which have once been settled on satisfactory evidence; and (in the other) in that of calling such principles into question, ever and again. But if it were required to distinguish *great minds* from *strong ones*, we must say, that the latter so hold their system of established truths, as to shut out their prospect of what may lie beyond it; while the former without quitting the ground of demonstration, without confounding the known with the hypothetical, never lose sight of that more distant range of things, which the human eye is permitted dimly to discern, though not distinctly to explore.

To return from this momentary digression, it may be affirmed that a man much addicted to religious meditation, comes into the possession of a rich and hidden treasure of undefined sentiments, and indistinct conceptions, which he is by no means prepared to explain and defend before all; and which he feels to be safe from spoliation, only when he himself is far removed from this impertinence and the insolence of the open world.

If the Recluse be thus strongly confirmed in his choice of a life of retirement; he is also, if single-hearted and sincere, freed, by his higher principles, from those motives which, in secular minds, counteract the desire of seclusion. It has not been a rare occurrence to see men of extraordinary intellectual stature, who yesterday were pressing

through the crowd, and challenging to themselves all eyes and ears, to-day betaking themselves, in high disgust, to some valley of silence: and yet to-morrow they will be found again in the very midst of the uproar of the world. A similar inconsistency has often marked the course of the self-admiring anchoret, who, after he has actually acquired the power of enduring the most intolerable of evils—absolute solitude, at length reverts to natural motives—strolls back towards the borders of his wilderness—towards the skirts of the profane world; and there gives it to be understood—that he consents to be gazed at!

But the genuine recluse, by his converse with absolute excellence, and by the firmness and distinctness of his hope of immortality, has gained a real mastery over the desire of human applause; and is truly content to live and die unknown of men: the motives therefore which retain him in solitude are not counterpoised by any other sentiments.

Yes;—but there remains a difficulty—an insuperable difficulty, in the way of the Recluse. This very Christianity, whence he has derived the various elements of his solitary bliss—this very book, which opens to him an inexhaustible treasure of ineffable meditation, itself peremptorily refuses to give its sanction to his purpose of seclusion:—it follows him to his cell with the most imperative commands; and requires him, instead of thus seeking to please himself to return into the very heart of every social relation, and to encumber himself with every office of common life!

Among the many unobtrusive, yet convincing evidences of the divine original of the Scriptures, the one now presented to us must not be overlooked, or deemed of small value. Christianity, which very far excels any

other system of religion the world has seen, in furnishing the means, and in presenting the objects, and in enhancing the motives, of solitary meditation, nevertheless takes the better course of good sense and benevolence, and enjoins (whatever may be the impulse of personal tastes) that "Godliness" should add to itself—"brotherly kindness."—In other words, declares, that no piety is authentic, which is not social.

XVIII.

THE MODERN ANCHORET.

"And to Brotherly Kindness, Charity."

Too much fondness for meditative retirement is not the crying sin of our modern Christianity. The mildness and modesty of monasticism is little likely to gain admirers among those whose activity, and whose frivolity; whose disputatious spirit, and whose tendency to scepticism; whose mercantile habits, and whose preference of physical science; lead them to hold in contempt whatever has no exchangeable value in society.

But it does not follow because we do not tolerate monasticism, and do not hold contemplative modesty in honour, that we should find no room at all for unsocial, malign, and selfish pietism. Facts prove the contrary. Nevertheless it is true, as might well be supposed, that the *modern* seclusive style of religion, adapts itself to the spirit of the age; and is altogether unlike the trembling, solitary taste of early ages. If there is to be in England, and in the nineteenth century, an abhorrent or repulsive system of religion, it must be abstruse, ratiocinative, stern, and in some sense philosophical. It must assume the form of erudite and metaphysical theology; and will be found no lover of shade, and silence, and peace—as inoffensive as imbecile; but bold, arrogant, full of defiance, rancour, contradiction; it will be loud, intolerant severe, exclusive, and aggressive: it will be inexorable, and factious. Such must be the style of anti-social godliness in our times, and for our country.

Is then this description altogether hypothetical; or may we actually trace it in the features of some existing party? This is to be inquired; and having already adverted to the principal perversion of Christianity, in our times, as exhibiting the twofold form of a higher, and a lower—an intellectual, and a vulgar corruption; we now name this higher and intellectual heresy, as identical with the modern anchoretic style of pietism.

The laborious task of nicely weighing and adjusting abstruse distinctions may very properly be renounced, when the common and intelligible principles of good feeling and sympathy between man and man, are in question. We shall therefore pay no regard whatever to those metaphysical propositions by which the ultra-calvinist may endeavour to repel the charge of being a fatalist: but assuming as fair, the obvious sense of the phrases he is accustomed to employ, shall describe and treat him as such. Now we affirm that although the amiable dispositions of an individual; or the happy inveteracy of the better instincts of our nature; or a prudent deference to common notions, and common modes of speaking, may greatly modify or disguise the fact; it is always true, that the fatalist, whether he be a philosophical or religious one (if he understands and truly believes his dogma) is a being insulated from the communion of the active and sympathetic world. He may, if he pleases, borrow the wings of Night, and pass beyond the bounds of the visible universe; or he may abide still in the precincts of the living; it is equally certain that his fatalism encompasses him with solitude: he is always alone, though in the midst of the busiest crowd. That man must assuredly be so, who has no faith in the *reality* of the principles and motives upon which the mass of mankind are acting—who holds the en-

tire machinery of the moral world to be an illusion, and who though he may in courtesy smile and weep when others do so, inwardly jeers that complicated farce of hopes and fears of which, as he thinks, mankind is the dupe.

The atheistical fatalist, and the theological fatalist—the man of abstract demonstrations, and the man of texts and polemics—he who makes mockery of his fellow-men profanely, and he who does the same thing in perverted phrases of Scripture, alike are UNIVERSAL SCOFFERS. Or if there be any thing excepted from the range of their contempt, it is just the little circle of their private welfare (for no philosopher of this class pretends to think his own pains and pleasures a jest). In the view of the fatalist, though there be a thousand petty absurdities on earth, nothing is half so absurd as the entire constitution of the moral system;—nothing so preposterous as—man, and his destinies! Or if the religious fatalist, when compared with the atheistical, seem to possess the merit of respecting the language and decencies of piety; it is only that he may commit a worse outrage upon the first principles of religious fear and love, by horridly distorting every attribute of the Divine Nature. Better were it at once to say "there is no God," than admit a Deity such as the fatalist supposes. The atheist saves a thousand impieties, by the one impiety of denying boldly the greatest and most certain of all truth. The religious fatalist can never speak honestly and consistently of either God or man, without uttering a blasphemy;—or a calumny.

And when he goes about to digest his notions of the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, he is compelled to impose a sense altogether novel and peculiar upon the terms—*Benevolence*, *Mercy*, *Justice*, *Holiness;* so that they no longer retain any analogy with the sense they

bear when applied to *human* sentiments and actions. In other words, he excludes the notion of the Divine character entirely from the circle of *human* ideas; and this is one and the same thing as to deprive the mind of man of the only conceptions it can form of God;—it is atheism —all but a name. When therefore a theologue of this school reverts to the precincts of human affections, he finds that the notions commonly entertained of *kindness*, *beneficence*, *rectitude*, and so forth have nothing in them that is divine or spiritual (on *his* principles), and he looks upon such emotions, or modes of conduct, with suspicion, or with contempt as *merely natural* and therefore proper objects of reprobation. A poor preparation, truly, for the faithful, and generous, and upright discharge of social duties! To think injuriously of God, is always to deprive or to nullify morality.

We are granting that our man of abstruse theology—intellectualist as he is, does not stand chargeable with violating the common rules of justice, or temperance: we consider him only as necessarily *anti-social* in his religious sentiments; and he is so (if indeed his principles take hold of his mind) because his theological ideas of moral qualities are altogether inapplicable to the human system; and can never be brought to work in with ordinary feelings of good-will, and charity. He is taught to shun, as false, if not pernicious, the entire body of these mundane emotions, and natural virtues. His religion is not an amendment, a purification, a restoration of things that have fallen into decay and corruption:—it does not mingle itself therewith, as a congenial leaven; but it is altogether a foreign element, abhorrent of all other principles, and exclusive of all others. The theologue feels that, in conversing at all with his fellow-men on the ground of *their*

notions or feelings, he is holding his own in abeyance, or forfeiting consistency;—such communion is a concession to folly and error, like that of a man, who for an hour, makes himself a party in the sports and prattle of children.

But though our religious sophist is thus shut out from free and ingenious converse with mankind at large, and is condemned to look in disdain upon the movements and sympathies of the wide world; may he not, at least, find scope for his benevolence within the pale of the church? If the bulk of mankind are to him estranged; what forbids him to—"love the brotherhood?" Alas! he is as much beset with difficulties in this narrower circle, as he was in the wider one. The cause of these new embarrassments may readily be found. There is an important difference between a *perfect science*, which admits nothing but what is demonstrable; and that sort of general, or loosely compacted knowledge, of the same subject, which may float at large among men. For while the latter allows of much variety and diversity of opinion, and admits many degrees of proficiency or advancement, the former is absolute and peremptory: it must be received entire, or rejected: it can no more grant indulgence to difference of opinions, than the elliptic arch can allow of a broken irregularity of line.

Now while the generality of Christians, as they modestly pursue their different paths of Scriptural inquiry, are conscious, and are ready to confess, that it is but a portion of divine kowledge which they severally attain; and that therefore it is most reasonable to exercise toward each other the indulgence of which each has a need in his turn—the professor of abstract or philosophical theology, challenges for his system the prerogatives of *a finished science.* In truth

it were preposterous, on his part, to take any lower ground. If fatalism of any kind is to be admitted, it must be yielded to because it is impossible to resist it. Seeing that the entire evidence of common experience, and the irresistible consciousness of men turns directly against any such doctrine, it can, of course, maintain its ground only *by force of logic.* Fatalism must needs be dogmatic and intolerant; if it would exist at all.

In perfect consistency with his claim of infliability, the theologue professes to have come into possesion of his scheme of religion, not in the slow, painful, and uncertain method of an induction of principles from Scripture; but by climbing the height of the Eternal throne—by looking into the records of universal government—and by having gained the climax, or apex, of divine science whence he can look down on all sides, and contemplate, at leizure, the great movements of the sentient system. In fact, sophists of this class are perpetually ascending to universals; —are always reaching the infinite: are taking position at the centre of truth. Their method is that of synthesis and comprehension; not of analysis and induction. Hence results, by a natural consequence, the paucity and uniformity of their themes, and the monotony of their discourses. The highest circle of abstraction can never admit of copiousness or variety.

But the special consequencse we have now to do with is that *intolerance* which, by an unavoidable necessity, attends hyper-theology. In the reason of things it can admit of no freedom, no internal play of parts; it is iron-bound on every side. You must receive it as it is; or reject it: there can be no middle course. It were folly to talk of diversities of opinion, or shades of difference, in

relation to that which, if it be absolutely true, is utterly false.

And then, because no two human minds can be brought into perfect unison; and because language, which is the vehicle of metaphysical dogmas, is a very faulty organ of conveyance; and moreover, because there will arise a thousand discordancies of opinion when a system of abstract theology comes to be adjusted to the various and unanxious language of the inspired writers, therefore it happens, that the metaphysical theologue never finds one whom he can deem to have reached the very line of truth that trembles on perfection. There can be no space for brotherhood, in this region of points that have no extension.

An appearance of exaggeration unavoidably attaches to every attempt to define and describe an abstract error like the one in question; because, in fixing and exposing *the secret principle* of such errors, and in marking them so distinctly as not to be afterwards confounded, we must affirm somewhat more than is perhaps actually to be found in any single example of the sort. But the fair question returns—Have we, or not, detained and held in our grasp a real existence?—have we so gone about it as to fix its relative position, and to give it truly a name, and place in our circle of ideas? And is it true, or not, that there is found among us a religious system, that is characteristically sullen, arrogant, intolerant, exclusive; a system that impels its adherents to frown upon mankind at large, to refuse aid and fellowship in all labours of evangelical benevolence, and to denounce, as heretical every form of doctrine, that does not reach a certain point of abstract perfection? Is there, we ask, among us, a doctrine which,

beyond any other, is *anti-social* and *uncharitable?* If not, we have been beating the air: or if hyper-calvinism be not that doctrine, we are chargeable with calumny.

It need not be proved that Christianity is the religion of brotherhood, and of good-will to mankind at large. The inference only remains to be noted—that the doctrine we have spoken of is not Christianity.

XIX.

THE FAMILY AFFECTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

"*Be kindly Affectioned one to another, with Brotherly Love.*"

The Christian sentiment of affection towards those whom we believe to be sharers with us in the hope of eternal life, and fellow-pilgrims through an unfriendly land to the same region of peace and joy, is of a peculiar kind; nor to be entirely resembled to any feeling common to mankind. Nevertheless it has a near analogy to the love that cements the domestic relations; and in comparing the one emotion—part by part with the other, we shall gain a distinct idea, both of the approximation of the two, and of their difference.

There meets us then, at the outset, that *difference* between family affection and Christian love, which springs from the primary constituent of the latter—namely the high immeasurable importance with which Christianity invests every human being, and by which it incalculably enhances whatever affects his wealth, or his moral condition. The affections of earth, how vehement soever, are transitory, as itself: but the love which has become combined with the idea of immortality, is firm, profound, and indestructible. Atheism, in all its forms, desiccates the affections. To believe that man perishes in death, as the grass of the field, is to rob the benign emotions of all that essentially distinguish them from the grossest animal in-

stincts. But on the contrary, when we extend our conceptions of human nature so as to embrace an unlimited futurity, we give, in the same proportion, force and enlargement to every feeling of which human beings are the objects. It is *only in religion* that we can find the the true philosophy of love; for love, a part from the belief of an after state, he has neither substance, nor purity. It will befound, as a matter of fact, that the faith of immortality, and the feeling of Christian love, are always in direct relation, one to the other, as to their intensity: if the one be in great force, the other is so: if the first languishes, in any age, the second disappears. And, at any moment, if the belief of eternal life could be suddenly invigorated, the spirit of faction and jealousy would instantly be exhalted from the church; and of Christians it would once more be said—"See how they love one another."

In this primary element of Christian affection, we readily find a reason sufficient to explain its comprehensiveness, and its universality, and its power of rising above those checks that might spring from the imperfection of individual character. The greater motive overpowers the less, in all the exercise of true love; and in Christian love, when simple and sincere, it is much more so. The brightness of immortality obliterates fainter impressions; and, when any one is indeed belived to be a Christian, the idea of dignity that connects itself with that persuasion, outweighs every other feeling. In each heir of heaven we see—heaven itself, more than the qualities or merits of him who is on the road thither: much in the same way as when some extraordinary occasion kindles the enthusiasm of an assembled nation, and the multitude, with joyous shouts in moving on, in procession; the high-wrought patriotism that floats in the air, binds heart to heart, even

among those who are personally strangers: every man, without question or scrutiny, grasps the hand of his neighbour, in frank and cordial good-will.

No other principle can generate an emotion comparable to Christian love, for the plain reason that no other principle has at command so vast an idea as that of endless existence. It is by the means of this great idea that the brotherly kindness taught by the Gospel arms itself against the disgusts and disappointments that will belong to whatever is human. Be it so, that the objects of our regard are ignorant (like ourselves) of much which it would well befit them to know: and be it also that the better and purer motives that work within them are (as with ourselves) much disturbed and thwarted by the unextinguished propensities of an evil nature. All this, or more, may be granted; and though human virtue, in its best specimens, is infirm, and much sullied, it is nevertheless true that every Christian, because he is such, and whatever may be his relative excellence, is treading the ascent of wisdom and goodness; and shall at length, notwithstanding many delays and repulses, reach an elevation on that upward path where he shall fairly challenge all our esteem. Yes, and it is true that an era in his course shall arrive when supernal beings—themselves ancient proficients in virtue, shall count him their worthy companion, and delight in his converse. If it were only on the strength of such anticipations, he might well now command our regard, who are subject to precisely the same conditions, and have need of the same indulgence.

Christian love has its most obvious analogy with the domestic affections in its sense of relationship, as brethren, through one who is related equally to all, as Head. But the emotion we are treating of draws a peculiarity from

the absence and invisibility of the Head of the family. There is a sense in which the members so represent the head, that He whom the mortal eye cannot discern, is brought, by their means, under the cognizance of the eye. So far as Christians truly exhibit the characteristics of their Lord, in spirit and conduct, a vivid emotion is enkindled in other Christian bosoms, as if the bright Original of all perfection stood dimly revealed. This emotion, perhaps, would hardly be generated by a single instance, or by a very few instances of the temper and behaviour that become the Gospel: for the divine image, in any single example, is too faint, or too much blemished, to bring with it forcibly the idea of Supreme Excellence to which is related. But in the multitude of instances there may clearly be seen a concurrence—a harmony—a convergence of evidence, such as leaves no doubt of the truth, that all are copies after the same pattern. The conclusion comes upon the mind with accumulated power, that we are not entertaining an illusion, while we believe that this *family resemblance*, this homogeneity of character, springs from a common centre; and that there exists, as its archetype, an invisible Personage, of whose glory all have in a measure partaken. The Christian brotherhood is therefore to each individual of the community a sensible proof of the reality of his faith; and each embraces all, not merely with affection; but with that peculiar solicitude and satisfaction wherewith the soul, at all times, grasps an assurance of the substantiality of its dearest hopes.

Christian love and the domestic affections may very appropriately be compared on the ground of that enhancement which both receive from the assured and familiar knowledge that prevails within their respective circles, of

the character and dispositions of each. It is not perhaps commonlv considered how much the strength, permanence, and vivacity of love depend upon the simple circumstance of an intimate acquaintance with the spirit of its object—its habits, purposes, infirmities, burdens, sorrows. The very reverse of this might have been imagined, as more probable; for it would have been natural to suppose that mankind being such as they are, mutual esteem and affection would have borne proportion directly to our ignorance one of another. But it is not so; on the contrary, ignorance of cach other's character, more than any other cause, represses the social sentiments, and checks every benign emotion. It does so, first, by giving room to suspicion, and to the chilling fear (a fear which pride enhances) of becoming the dupes of hypocrisy; and next, by depriving the imagination of its means of vividly conceiving of the actual feelings or sorrows of those around us; and this lively impression is, by the laws of the human mind, indispensable to the vigorous movements of sympathy. That which the imagination does not realize, the heart does not heed. It is this principle that explains much of the apparent insensibility and indifference to the sufferings of others, which is shown by the mass of mankind.

But the intensity and tranquil permanence of love most of all depend upon the exclusion of all lurking doubts concerning the secret dipositions or real sentiments of the objects of our regards. Now human nature is so mystical a thing, its external characteristics are so variable, or at least so intricate in their combinations, and the outward and ordinary symbols of inward emotion are so fine, or so fallacious, that nothing can give us the certain assurance we need, except the close and intimate familiarity of

domestic life: and it is an admirable provision of the divine wisdom which affords us the opportunity of knowing best those whom we ought most to love and succour. The unlooked for incidents of family history, and its sudden excitements, and its arduous occasions, bring the individuals of the home circle within the sanctuary of each other's bosoms. And then, there is always going on in each mind an unobserved process of induction, wherein the listless actions, and trivial expressions of every hour, go to form an estimate, in the mind of each, of the worth and quality of the others; until each feels that he has almost as perfect a knowledge of the heart of brother, sister, parent, child, husband, wife, as of his own. It is on the solid ground of this *familiar knowledge* that the domestic affections take their tranquil standing; and unless the companions of our lives are absolutely unworthy of our love, or ourselves are incapable of pure and generous emotions, we shall love them with more vivacity, and with more steadiness, when the depth of their faults has been sounded, than we could while ignorance (mother of jealousy and fear) stood in the way between heart and heart. To harbour the thought that there is yet at all in the soul of one near to us a concealment we have not explored is the same thing as to hold the whole of our affection in abeyance.

It is this *home familiarity*—this domestic perfection of knowledge, that opens the sluices of sensibility, that vivifies every sympathy, that makes the sentient principle of each common to all; so as in a manner to blend identities, and to diffuse consciousness through the social body. The many become one, by the mutuality of power of enjoyment, and of suffering. There is, even in the most benevolent minds, an instinctive revulsion from the sight

of pain, which compels it to escape from the scene of woe, and which has to be overcome by higher motives. But in relation to those who are within the immediate circle of our affections, this instinct is not in operation; or gives way to an opposite impulse, which irresistibly detains us by the side of the object of our passionate fondness, in the hour of distress. This sympathy is little less than a perfect image, or counterpart of the sorrow or anguish that is its cause. Just as when the clear and glowing sunbeams of a sultry day fall upon the bosom of a reeking cloud, there is seen a second bow, embracing the first, and it is hard to say whether the tender colours of the reflection are not as distinct as those of the primary arch; at least the one faithfully corresponds to the other.

And now must we indeed run back to the first era of Christianity in search of illustrations of our parallel be-between Christian love and family affection? Let it be granted that the diffusion of a lax or false profession of religion has, to a great degree, slackened the fervour of that brotherly kindness which the Gospel generates and enjoins; —for no one well knows who is indeed his "brother in Christ."—Nevertheless it is still true that this fruit of the Spirit is produced, is ripened, is gathered, within the church. It is now, as always true, that the Gospel so opens the heart of man to man, that the benign affections take their start at once from the vantage ground of intimate acquaintance. It is true that Christians know each other in a sense which is altogether peculiar to Christianity.

This affirmation may readily be made good. Man, while he continues unregenerate, does not know his brother, for this conclusive reason—that he does not know himself. The inbred infatuation which prevents his seeing

his relation to God, and his destination to another life, spreads itself as a spirit of blindness through his soul; and brings with it endless confusions and mistakes. Nothing of the inner world is simply and correctly understood: the heart is a maze of preposterous suppositions, the varnished motives, and idle conceits of self-love. The world reflects itself on the mirror of the mind in distorted proportions; or appears in phantasm; and the imagination, erroneously moved by these images of things unreal, or exaggerated, breeds an abundance of vanities. Moreover the conscience, turbid with hidden evils, and not appeased by the flattery itself prepares, refuses to have the abyss of the soul exposed and explored; and the mind betakes itself to any diversion that may interrupt the dreaded inquiry. There is indeed a knowledge of the profundities of corruption which is called "knowledge of human nature;" but falsely so called; for it is both incomplete, and extravagant:—it is satire; not truth: it is palliation; not charity: and while it imputes more evil intentions than actually exist; it puts a glowing of fair colours upon what is really odious. How should any one know and confide in another, who neither knows, nor ever heartily confides in himself?

But the light that attends the entrance of the divine word diffuses itself through all concealments of the heart. The motives of secresy being destroyed, nothing can long remain hidden; and that new ingenuousness which has been imparted, and which has issued in an unfeigned confession of guilt, becomes, more or less, the habit of the mind. Pride, heretofore faithful guardian of the evil arcana of the soul, is expelled from his trust, and made to leave all things open to scrutiny. The time is the time of inquiry, and of judgment; and the result is that

peace and confidence—that stillness of the spirit, which is never to be enjoyed until the heart of man has dealt plainly with itself.

Now it is manifest that whoever has in this manner come into familiarity with himself, has, by the same means, obtained a way of access to the heart of those whom he believes to have reached the same point of self-knowledge. The hidden world has been explored by both parties; and many thick clouds of doubt and suspicion are rolled away from between two spirits, each of which has become permeable to the same beams of light. The Christian, in meeting his fellow Christian, tacitly says—"This is one who knows himself—has made frank confession of his hidden faults—who has renounced the pride of concealment, and who sincerely invites the eye of God, and of his brethren. We may differ much in temperament; and may have run through a different course; but the conclusion we have reached is substantially the same: nor does his heart contain any capital or ruling motive with which mine can have no sympathy." Thus are the tedious and uncertain preliminaries of worldly friendship abridged, or superseded; and the path at once laid open to the kindliness and familiarity of affection.

Moreover, on this same principle of the efficacy of knowledge to enchance mutual love, the affection of Christians, one for the other, derives freedom and force from that *simplification of motives* which genuine piety produces. The love of God is a paramount affection, that forcibly carries in its train other inclinations, and leads captive a host of petty wishes and ephemeral desires. This is the meaning of that axiom—"Ye must, to enter the kingdom of heaven, become as little children." Simplicity of spirit, singleness of intention, harmony and unison of all emo-

tions, is the law of the heavenly world, and must belong in measure, to all who claim part therein. There can be allowed no anarchy of the passions in the bosom that is to lodge the Divine Spirit; and it is always true that where Omnipotent Grace takes possession of a human heart, it expels in its very entrance the legion of lawless desire. The Christian, therefore, conscious as he is in himself of this new simplification of his own motives, imputes it without fear to every one whom he believes also to be a Christian. Thus again the familiarity of mutual knowledge is attained by the riddance that is made of the crowd of inferior principles. The dark surmises and threatening storms of ordinary friendship are scattered, as the gales of spring drive away the vapours and congelations of winter.

But this is not all: for the love which is founded on knowledge must have its delicacy, and its peculiarity, arising from the individual sentiments and personal interest of the parties. And it is so in Christian love; for while the great motives of the Gospel reduce the multiplicity and confusion of the passions by their commanding force they do, by the very same energy, expand all sensibilities; or (if we might so speak) send the pulse of life with vigour through the finer vessels of the moral system: there is far less apathy, and a far more equable consciousness in the mind after it has admitted Christianity, than before; and, by necessary consequence, there is more individuality, because more life. Christians, therefore, while they understand each other more readily than other men do, have far more of sentiment to make the subject of converse than others. The comparison of heart with heart knits heart to heart, and communicates to friendship very much that is sweet and intense.

The domestic affections derive a good part of their power, as well as constancy, from the recollection that the ties of nature are indissoluble: and again, from this feeling, there springs another, which, when love is genuine, acquires an intensity of force, and the property of which is to reject, with agony, the supposition of final separation, even at the most distant period. We have already observed, and it is a most important truth, that the immortal instincts of the human spirit—its destination to a future life, are brought out into activity by the social sentiments: and no one will question this who has in truth known the tenderness and vivacity of love. The beneficent intentions of the Author of our nature are eminently seen in this part of our moral constitution. The social affections have a precarious season of growth, during which they are exposed to much injury; or sometimes to absolute extinction, from the disgusts, indiscretions, and caprices, that, even in the most favourable instances, infest the family circle: and if it were not for the appointment of God, and the usuages of society, which cement the domestic body, nothing would be more frequent than those eruptions of passion which would in a moment scatter and desolate families. To the strength of the ties of nature, society at large owes its order and repose, even where love scarcely exists, or has little influence. But on those sunny spots where the tender emotions bloom and reach their perfection, the indissoluble bond, which is not at all felt as a yoke, is regarded with delight; and the sentiment connected with it is fondly cherished, as it afforded security both against the chances of fortune, and the power of the grave. "We are one—for ever one! neither the storms of life, nor the hand of death, shall part us!" This is always the fond emphatic language of true love.

The analogy holds good in Christian affection; although the *comprehensiveness* of this emotion, or its partition among many objects, abates proportionably, a present, its intensity. But future circumstances may perhaps raise it to the highest imaginable degree of force.

The relative condition of the Christian body, as hitherto it has existed in the world, gives it always much of the feeling that belongs to a family, or a small and distinct community, barely tolerated, and unkindly received, in a foreign land. Everywhere a small minority, and everywhere, if not outraged, scorned, and holding in common a bright hope which the mass of mankind treats with contempt, Christians (in proportion to the vivacity of their faith) cannot but cling together as partners in obloquy and danger. This feeling is distinctly seen in operation, even where external circumstances most tend to repress it; nor is there any sphere within which spiritually-minded persons do not feel that they need each other's aid and affection, as a support against the hostility that surrounds them. It is no misanthropic sentiment which compels them to close their ranks, and present a front of defence against the malignant crowd that hems them in. "Behold," said their Lord, "I send you forth as sheep among wolves;"—nor has any age yet passed over the church, which afforded no exemplification of the truth thus emically conveyed.

And moreover Christians, when vividly impressed with the momentous facts on which their faith is fixed, are conscious of their partnership in the awful transactions of the invisible world. The men whose thoughts are bounded by the present life, hurry along upon the broad way of pleasure and business exchanging, as they go, the trivial courtesies of the moment; but mutually indifferent, as

those must needs be, who soon are to part, by plunging, severally and alone, into the shoreless oblivion of death. Not so with the followers of Christ. They stand in close order, as a phalanx that has yet a foe to meet—a victory to achieve, and a triumph to enjoy. A common solitude, and a common hope, bind their hearts together. Death divides them, but it is only as the successive ranks of a host are divided, when summoned, in turn, to advance and pass singly a perilous defile. Beyond that strait of momentary gloom and danger, all are again to be marshalled; and every one to join his commander. Christian affection, therefore, has the permanency it derives from an indissoluble bond;—the vigour given it by a participation in sufferings and reproaches;—and the depth it receives from the prospect of an unbounded futurity.

And may we not (adhering still to sound principles of calculation) look even into that futurity, and imagine faintly the enhancement which shall be given to the principles that are now in their stage of germination. Let it then be remembered, that to remove from any energy its antagonist, is the same thing as to impart to it a new force. Only remove from the affections of earth all dregs of malignity, all chills of apathy, all suspicions, all discretions, all errors in matters of fact, and all opposition of interest and how brightly would they burn! Heaven shall effect this liberation of love from its thraldoms. Nor is this all; for if love is to get purity and elevation from its expansion or enlargement, it must owe its intensity to its direction toward specific objects: and it may well be conceived that when the ransomed myriads of mankind shall come to take their station in the great circle of a far larger and more ancient community, and shall, in degree, be blended in the universal family of Heaven, a fresh sanction shall

be given to the relationship that originated on earth;—that the progeny of Adam, yes, and much more, the brethren of the Second Adam—the "Lord from heaven," shall be bound together anew, in office, neighbourhood, and destiny; so that the fondness of a tie strictly indissoluble shall be communicated to the affection that originated in their primeval abode.

Not improbably (if we regard the great laws of the world of Mind) the *speciality* as well as the *universality* of love shall have place in the future economy. And the *personal tenderness* of immemorial attachment shall go along with all spirits, through interminable eras. The redeemed of the earth, known perhaps on all the plains of joy, and at once distinguishable, by the specific contour of their celestial forms, shall be companions of eternity. May we not then, while forgetting the imperfections, and the obscurity, and the feebleness, that attach to this present wintry season of the heart, fairly impute to our Christian friendships a value drawn from the treasures of futurity? This at least is certain—how much soever we may err in matters of particular conjecture—that while earth and its ephemeral interests are hastening to oblivion whatever is divine, whatever partakes of the nature of the immutable attributes of God, must be indestructible; and must grow until it attains perfection. Every article of human knowledge may be deemed untrue, sooner than this—"That Love is of God," and "shall never fail."

XX.

CHARITY AND CONSCIENCE.

"For Meat destroy not the Work of God."

While we are looking on the side of human nature, we are too often impelled to believe that the principle of conscience is, of all the powers that have any influence over the conduct of men, the most lax, nugatory, and inefficacious: but then if we turn to another side, it as often appears peremptory, intractable and stubborn. In those matters of morality which are comprehended under the heads of justice, temperance, moderation, and mercy; it seems as if human ingenuity were never to be baffled in its attempts to reconcile the impulses of appetite, or the suggestions of interest, with the dictates of conscience;—or, in other words, as if conscience were the most bland, patient, and compliant of all authorities. Yet how can we grant it this praise when we see with what rigour, with what precision, with what sternness, this same dictator gives sentence in questions relating to the doctrine, or the ritual;—to the substance, or the forms;—the theory, or the polity, of religion? It is as if the word *Conscience* were the appellative of two unconnected personages, of whom the one is as austere as the other is indulgent.

But it is not so. Man, with all his inconsistencies, has but one faculty, or sense of right and wrong. Nor is the supposition of sarcastic and irreligious men well founded, who, in contemplation of such facts, draw the caustic conclusion—That the severity of conscience, in matters of religion, is proved to be hypocrisy, by its laxity in matters

of morality: or that there can be nothing sincere in the zeal and scrupulosity of those who show themselves to be far from punctilious in the simple and intelligible instances of common life—in fair dealing, truth, or purity. But there is as much of rude inaccuracy, as of malice, in decisions of this sort; and if those who thus give judgment upon their fellow-men, and who ordinarily pride themselves not a little upon their penetration, could only see somewhat deeper beneath the surface of human motives, they would stand convicted of ignorance, as well as harshness.

The human mind, even in the best samples, is far from being *equally quick*, or sensitive, in all its faculties; or equally *sentient* towards all the objects that are presented to it: and if we might adopt any general rule by means of which to foreknow when, or on what occasions, the intellectual and moral powers will be alive, and when inert, or topid, it might perhaps be this—That they are stimulated most certainly, and most instantaneously, by what is definite; and less so by whatever is vague, or indistinct. Now, if we exclude from our account, instances of absolute knavery, and conscious hypocrisy, it will be found that religious persons are in fault (a hundred instances to one) in those multifarious matters of *imperfect obligation* (as they have been termed) to which the rules of right and wrong are not readily applicable, and which come under the jurisdiction only of pure and elevated habits of feeling. But the religious man is not justly to be condemned as a knave, or hypocrite, because he has made small advances in the higher morality of the spiritual life. Yet it is precisely the obtuseness, shall we say the vulgarity, of his soul, that leaves him liable to commit hourly offences against the maxims of honour, kindness, candour, or personal virtue. And if the interior of his

heart, could be exposed, it would probably not exhibit any vivid sense of culpability on such occasions ;—nothing, in fact, but a confused consciousness of having been rather too little on his guard, against his besetting sins. Nay, such persons will often be found (*from the want of efficient instruction in matters of morality*) altogether unconscious of the evil of certain habits and practices, which expose them to the most grave imputations.

Meanwhile the case is quite otherwise in reference to points of theology, or to questions of ritual, or polity. And on this ground, beside that the matters in debate have all the distinctness which the anxiety of sacred logic, or which the synodical wisdom of statutes and canons can secure to them, they are imagined (by a most strange perversion of right reason) to stand much more closely related to the Divine authority, than do the articles of vulgar morality : —as if God, notwithstanding his solemn affirmation of the contrary, were far more intent upon the accuracy of creeds, and the legality of rites, than upon the observance of the rules of virtue. *Belief* and *worship* are things of Religion ; —and therefore more *sacred* than justice, truth, and temperance. This has been, in all ages, the current delusion of religionists.

Every man's style, or *rate* of morality, at any given period of his life, is the slowly ripened product of his entire course up to that moment, influenced, as it has been, by personal temperament, by secular engagements, by social alliances, and, especially, by the salubrity, or the infected condition, of the moral atmosphere he has breathed. Now it is not of a product so gradually formed, so intimately related to the habits of the soul, and so familiar to it, that ordinary minds are qualified to form an impartial estimate. In fact very few men judge themselves,

on the several points of morality, with any high degree of precision, or fairness. And then, if we are speaking of the religious—the eager discussion that are always rife in the Church on articles of belief, or ceremony, engross all the attention that is at command ;—so that little or no leisure is found for entertaining the comparatively vapid questions of right and wrong, in the things of common life, No energy of mind, no zeal is directed towards subjects of this class ; they are therefore but too indistinctly discerned by the generality of good folks.

But this want of vigour in the moral life is not hypocrisy ; is not knavery ; and is perfectly consistent, not only with general sincerity in religion, but with a vivid and honest zeal for what is deemed "divine truth," and "divine authority," in the creed, and the ritual.

The minds of men are *alive*, to the extent of the particular excitements that are acting upon them : and when the principles of conscience, and fear, and the sentiments of public consistency, or party obligation, are called into activity on some special question, all the religious emotion of which the individual is susceptible, draws towards it, as a centre ; and the man's piety, entire, just goes to fill out that circle of controversy. It is when the mind is in this state, that there takes place a perilous opposition between the two principles which ought always to harmonize—namely, those of love toward the brotherhood, and of zeal and fidelity towards God and his truth. In too many instances the latter motive prevails over the former ; the definite over the indefinite obligation, and, as an inevitable consequence, rancour, maledictions, and schisms, burst out, and devastate the precincts of celestial peace.

It is very true, and must never be forgotten, that the factions which have divided the Christian body, have owed

their vivacity, and asperity, to the ill tempers, or the ambition of a few individuals—those demagogues and fanatics whom the Scripture designates as "grievous wolves." But it is not less true, though less regarded, that Religious discords have always rested upon the broader foundation of a mistaken, or ill-informed conscientiousness, on the part of the people at large. Without this firm bottom, factions quickly become mere personal feuds, and die away, and are forgotten in a summer. The heresiarch well understands this principle, and acts upon it advisedly. To make *himself* simply, or his personal interests, or credit, the object of popular zeal, were an enterprise that must soon fall to the ground. So must the attempt to keep malign passions in a state of irritation without a specious occasion. Conscience—conscience is the word, that is to be employed—The "truth of God" is to be asserted and defended at all risks; and "the enemies of Heaven," the contumacious impugners of "Divine authority," are to be cursed, avoided, extirpated!

We do little if we just depict and inveigh against the temper and proceedings of the few fanatical agitators. Such men would have no influence at all, if they did not find the means, of pending upon certain powerful motives that are common to human nature, and that are peculiarly vigorous when animated by religious ideas. We ought therefore to endeavour to follow home the principle, upon the working of which the spiritual demagogue calculates, and upon which the stress of his power rests. He breeds animosity among brethren, and brings the worst of all scandals upon Chritianity; but he does so only by putting into activity a motive which all must confess to be, in itself, not only lawful, but an indispensable element of piety; namely, zeal for the purity of faith, and for the authority

of Christ. Here then one sound principle is seen to overpass and trample upon another.—The two are waging war, and the one triumphs by the destruction of the other. But so deplorable a contrariety can never have taken place without the previous admission of some capital error. Our question then is where does it lie; and what is its definition?

Nothing in Christianity is more conspicuous (nay, it is one conspicuous article from which the whole system derives its character) than that Christians are to love each other unfeignedly, as brethren; and moreover to live in the constant interchange of all the outward and visible tokens of affection. This being an absolute and primary rule, there must exist a capital fault, on one side, or both as often as it is violated. But then it is also true that, of every Christian it is demanded, as the test of his allegiance to Christ, that he should always be ready, without fear or favour, or calculation of personal consequences, to profess and defend what he believes to be the Divine Will in matters of belief and practice: in other words, that, in the things of religion, he should maintain fealty to God, at whatever cost or risk of things temporal. Now in the actual state of the world, and of religious profession it must often happen that the Christian's fidelity to his Lord will place him in opposition (not to say hostility) to the great body of those who call themselves by the same sacred name. Such occasions seem to bring into contrariety the two great principles of Love and Fidelity; at least they demand a special exercise of discretion in order to prevent the clashing of the two.

Or a case of another sort may easily arise, namely—that of individuals, or of small bodies, who in much seriousness, and with entire sincerity, having unfortunately adopted an initial erroneous position, from which

they correctly derive inferences that would be quite valid if their first principle were sound, are drawn on to think themselves obliged both to denounce the body of Christians as grievously corrupted in doctrine, and to separate themselves from their fellowship. Such individuals, or parties, may fully persuade themselves that, any longer to associate with the Church at large, would be to violate their consciences. In instances of this kind we have the double mischief of schism, and of schism without occasion;—a feud is generated, with all its inseparable virulence; but a feud is devoid of reason: it is therefore an evil not compensated by any beneficial result; it is not remedial; not conservative. And yet has it sprung from a sound principle; and moreover the authors of it are men sincere and devout. Where then is the false assumption, or false inference, by means of which a pure evil has derived itself from good? It would be well indeed if this could be ascertained.

No shadow of ambiguity can rest upon the course to be pursued by one who receives religious principles at large, or particular instructions, *immediately from Heaven*, in the way of unquestionable miraculous interposition; and who is commanded to promulgate what he has so learned. Whoever bears a commission of this sort, may calmly discharge his duty, and may leave all consequences to the disposal of Him who has foreseen every contingence. This being obvious, it seems not less so, that *the absence of miraculous attestations* ought to make some difference in the conduct, or at least in the style, of those who, within the pale of the church, go about to announce new truths, to enforce novel practices, or to condemn that which exists. If the man who derives his peculiar religious opinions simply (and by his own confession) *from his personal study of the Scriptures*, and who has

enjoyed none but ordinary aids, and who can advance no pretension which other men may not also challenge, is entitled to speak in the tone, and to exercise the authority of a prophet or apostle, then what was the necessity for the extraordinary powers where with prophets and apostles were endowed? Or to view the matter on another side; it is evident that there can be no right of speaking and acting, in the name of Heaven, which does not imply a correlative duty, on the part of the people, to yield submission to such authority. But the church will then often be placed in the dilemma of having its submission demanded by hostile teachers—a dilemma which has never attended the ministry of men who indeed confirmed their testimony by miracles.

We should not for a moment hold controversy with the originator of a separate communion on the question whether he ought or not to promulgate the will of Christ *when he knows it*, and to challenge the obedience of all men to that will. This duty is granted. But we may surely ask him to exhibit his credentials. We shall be the first to submit to his dictation—the first to become his sectarists, when we have actually seen the seal of heaven in his hand, and are satisfied on the capital point of his divine legation.

Times of extraordinary fanatical excitement excepted, the leaders of sects do not allow to themselves the use of language which, by its arrogance, would supply its own refutation. But the occult and fundamental principle of all ecclesiastical despotism on the one side, and of all factious separation on the other—of all religious rancour and hostility, whether it be avowed or not, is this *assumption of Divine authority* on behalf of what is simply an individual opinion. "I THINK SO," is the

whole *residuum* that can be found after evaporating the prodigious pretensions of the zealot-demagogue. What is this "will of the Lord"—this "authority of Heaven"—this "sacred cause of truth and righteousness?" Nothing, absolutely nothing more than—"I think so." Stript the schismatic's declamation of its finery and its sublimity; of its thunder and its fire; and there remains just this meagre, and scarcely visible particle, the intrinsic value of which it would be impossible to express.

Yet no delusion is more natural, or more easily fallen into, or more hard to be dissipated, than that of the sincere and devout, though arrogant dogmatist, who persuades himself (and others) to feel, and to speak, and to act, with more confidence and intolerance than those ever showed who were intrusted with the power of raising the dead. The enthusiasm and the spirit of exaggeration which attend always a long-continued and exclusive attention to a single subject, and which, so often, render the mathematician, the physiologist, the artist, or the man of letters, absurd, are incalculably enhanced by the more profound emotions that belong to religion. Now though this feeling of the infinite importance of religious truth is perfectly reasonable when religious truth in the aggregate is its object, and which can never become exorbitant when any one of the great principles of faith is in question, is ineffably preposterous when attached to the private expositions of this or that individual. The dogmatist is not wrong in believing and affirming, that the pure sense of the Inspired Writings is of more price than much fine gold; nor wrong in bestowing his zealous labours upon the worthy employment of seeking to obtain this pure sense; nor wrong in giving utterance to the results of his studies, and his prayers: and whoever would interrupt him

in this work, or would dare to restrain him in the promulgation of his opinions, is guilty of the most atrocious of all outrages. But alas! it is neither the private and personal enjoyment of the true sense of Scripture, that contents the dogmatist; nor the full liberty to prosecute his inquiries; nor the unbounded tolerance of his public labours. None of these things satisfy his zeal: nor is the fervour of his spirit at all assuaged by what (one would think) the pleasing spectacle of the general church (though erroneous, as he thinks, in particulars) yet possessed of the fundamental principles of piety. All this is as nothing so long as submission is withheld to his exposition, which is indeed—"The sense of Scripture."

To allay in some measure the uneasiness which the obstinacy and contumacy of the Christian world occasions him, the dogmatist first enhances, by all means, his own inward conviction of the truth of his doctrine: and for this purpose he has recourse to the excitements of devotion, as well as to the corroboration of argument. Then he surrounds himself with coadjutors, flatterers (if he can); and after kindling the lights of their zeal from his own candle, comforts himself in the general warmth that is thus produced. Furthermore he confirms both his faith and his courage, by uttering aloud his contempt and condemnation of all gainsayers: and lastly, to prove ostensibly the depth and sincerity of his convictions, he cuts himself off from the corrupt body of the church; and solemnly turning to the train of his adherents, says,—"Come out, and touch not the unclean."

But it will be said; and we would not wait to be reminded of the fact—That there is a probability, perhaps a high probability, that the man whom we have termed a dogmatist, and spoken of with reprobation, is one whom

the Lord has taught, and sent forth, to inveigh against prevailing corruptions. Was not Wicliffe such? Were not Huss, and Luther, such? Or if we were to pass by the few signal instances, concerning which no dispute can well arise—let what may be called *the average probability*, in the case of the reformer, and the innovator, be thus stated—That he has got possession of some single truths, more or less important, which the church has forgotten, or discarded, and which he asserts: but in doing so, mingles with them a considerable proportion of mere extravagance and folly. Even the illustrious Chiefs of reformation must take their part in such an acknowledgment: much more the host of less noble innovators.

Now if we are to speak of this ordinary case, as it stands between the general body of Christians, and the man who denounces particular errors; it is quite plain that an adherence, on his part, to the modest course of plainly declaring his opinion, and quietly setting forth the reasons of it; and entreating the attention of his brethren, promises to be productive of as much good as is likely to result from his petulant separation. If indeed the general body will not tolerate any such expression of private opinion—if it attempts to impose silence upon him, to crush him; if, in the true spirit of obdurate folly, it will "hear no reproofs," and casts forth the troublesome member; then the whole blame of division rests with the body, not with the dissident individual. The church is the Schismatic, when it has no ear, and no indulgence, for diversities of sentiment.

But, in the great majority of the instances which church history presents to us, the leader of factions has not asked —has not seemed to wish, for that sort of indulgence which would imply, on his part, a corresponding modesty and moderation. He demands unconditional submission

to the points he insists on, as if he could claim divine authority for each article of his private creed. And indeed this supposition runs through all his ideas—inflates all his language—exaggerates the whole of his behaviour—stiffens his inflexibility, and animates his courage in suffering.

Is it denied that the dogmatic sectarist ordinarily assumes any such divine authority to attach to his peculiar opinions? He is, we grant, rarely guilty of so much presumption in explicit words. Nevertheless he proceeds as far in act as he could do if every syllable of his creed had been authenticated by signs from heaven. First he scorns and lays aside the modest phraseology of one who simply declares a private opinion, and as modestly shows his reason. Prophets and apostles have done no more than thus use the absolute style of infallible knowledge. Then he excommunicates all who do not submit to his peculiar notions, and declares them unworthy of his fellowship. What more than this could be done by him who said—"If I come, I will give a proof of Christ speaking in me"? Those numerous passages of Scripture which at once enjoin mutual forbearance, and forbid division on any points *not manifestly necessary to Christian belief*, are so thoroughly perspicuous, that, being confessedly of divine authority, they must demand nothing less than an equally clear announcement from the same source, to abrogate or hold them in abeyance. Whoever therefore does so treat them as a nullity, virtually pretends to an unquestionable conveyance of the divine will to himself in that particular.

The will of Christ is—That his followers, notwithstanding many diversities of opinion, should remain in love and communion. Whoever then, on pretence of obedience to Christ, breaks up this communion, assumes

to himself a direct commission from Heaven to that effect. The prohibition of church divisions is as explicit and intelligible as the prohibition of murder; and if a miraculous attestation must be demanded of the manslayer who violates the one, so must it of the separatist who contemns the other. This principle is in fact tacitly acknowledged, and has always been assumed, on both sides of religious discords:—the despotic beholders of ecclesiastical power, in their persecutions, and the separatists in their resistance and remonstrance, have, in every case, claimed for their doctrine and practice the weight of DIVINE AUTHORITY.

The world (and the church) is incalculably indebted for the degree of repose that is actually enjoyed, to the conservative inertness of the human mind, which holds it always far short of the goal of extravagance to which otherwise it would often run. And both are, to the same effect, indebted to those motives of interest and fear, which hush evil passions more effectually than reason or humanity; and (once more) to that under-current of common sense, which sets strongly athwart the course of agitators, and gives a great degree of steadiness to the general movements of the social system. What would man be if it were not for his happy inconsistencies? What, if he fulfilled every hasty resolution, and acted in entire accordance with every abstract principle? The peace of the church (it is to be feared) is attributable almost as much to the sedative causes we have just named, as to the operation of better principles. It is manifest that if every Christian followed up, completely, the doctrine which is advanced to justify separation on secondary points, every Christian must be, a church to himself;—at once—the teacher, and the taught. With a volume in his hand so large and multifarious as the Bible; an ancient book too, which is

known only by interpretation ; a book which contains, as history, very much that is not rule or code—with such a book in his hand, and with his ignorance, his inclinations, and his fancy, as his assessors in judgment, what would be the consequence if every one actually attributed *to the whole* of his sense of the meaning of Scripture, the solemn authority and importance which, as a Sectarist, he attributes to certain points of it? And yet he would be much perplexed if required to show why certain private interpretations, of which he says little or nothing, should not have as much honour done them as those other points that divide him from the communion of the general church. He would probably reply—" These are nothing more than my private opinions, concerning which it becomes me to be very diffident." And what more or better are those matters of strife which distinguish his sect? They are precisely—private opinions, concerning which it does indeed behove him to be very diffident—unless he is prepared to claim for them the sanction of immediate revelation. Let him but narrowly sift his ideas, and he will certainly find that the opinions of which he speaks with caution, and for the sake of which he would shudder to break communion with his friends, differ absolutely in nothing (but their subject) from those other articles which, by some fatality, have come to be inscribed in crimson letters upon the banners of faction. Nevertheless the awe and power of the Divine sanction have been arbitrarily attached to the one set of interpretations, and not to the other. He may perhaps persuade himself that the opinions that make him a sectarist have stronger evidence than those which he holds in silence : but he will be compelled, in many instances, at least, to confess that this is not the fact. Or he may allege that the one are intrinsi-

cally more important than the other. But here again he would find himself grievously embarrassed if urged to establish the nice point of *relative value* in matters of doctrine or practice.

The plain fact is, that the course of events, political and ecclesiastical, the progress or depression of religious knowledge, at different eras; and, not least, the intellectual peculiarities and passions of some few prominent individuals, have combined to bring under discussion (as it were by chance) particular interpretations of Scripture; leaving in the shade innumerable other points which might as well have been thrown upon the stage of strife; while to the one, and not to the other, though all are alike precious as portions of the same Revelation, there has been attributed the authority of God, so that it became matter of conscience to insist upon them, as conditions of fellowship.

But it is a truth which should never be lost sight of, that sectarianism is always what ecclesiastical despotism makes it. This has found its verification in our own country; nor is there any general principle, perhaps, that more urgently demands, at the present moment, the attentive consideration of enlightened and liberal minds. Let it be granted that, both in the order of nature, and the order of time (to use a scholastic distinction) the sectarist moves before the despot; or that the former is the originator of church feuds. We will grant this, though instances might be adduced which have quite a contrary aspect;—just as the petulance and rigour of a father is often the first cause of rebellion in his family. But let the concession be assumed as true; it may still safely be affirmed that the lust of spiritual domination (foul passion—enormous crime!) has imparted almost all the mischievous force it has actually exerted to religious factions. Thus the ex-

plosion of combustible matter is rendered fatal by confinement and compression.

Among the many evil consequences (too many to be soon enumerated) of that most flagitious of all outrages—the outrage that is committed by ecclesiastical power upon the souls of men—the one we have now to do with peculiarly claims to be noticed, inasmuch as it especially affects the spirit of religious parties in the British empire; nor only so; but has needlessly transmitted its agency to the new world, where it can have no pretence for exerting any influence.

The despotism of the Romish Church—a despotism which, without any heat, or any improper extension of the meaning of words, may be called DIABOLICAL, was indeed successfully withstood; and yet was not discerned, or for its own sake abhorred, by the Reformers. They fought the tyranny of Rome; but they fought not with spiritual tyranny in the abstract. That same church-usurpation, headed up during the course of many silent ages, to a prodigious height, within the Papal enclosure, broke as a deluge over all the ground of the Reformed Church, and filled, to the brim, every cavity of the foundations on which the new structures were to be reared. The arch-enemy of mankind consoled himself under the loss of so many fair provinces and kingdoms of his visible empire, by contemplating the extension, through every one of those dissevered realms, of the first principle of the ancient corruption: and less than satanic sagacity might forsee that, church tyranny—pure or impure in creed and worship, would soon bring true religion again to its lowest ebb.

The transferred spirit of despotism, which was allowed to animate the whole of our new and reformed ecclesias-

tical institutions, encountered at once, as was inevitable among a people like the natives of the British soil (when quickened by knowledge and piety) an unconquerable resistance. Let every nation of the continent bow, one after another, and kiss again that iron sceptre—the iron whereof "entereth the soul." Let all christendom beside, in feigned humility, drink again the cup of the stench of priestly debauchery and pride:—the men of the British islands—or the Christians among them, would no more become thus vile in the sight of Heaven, and in their own estimation. Nay, this is but half the truth;—for God would not permit that *all* the earth should be enslaved anew; and to prevent it, He gave courage to multitudes of the Christians of Britian, that they might contend (through the tedious years of two centuries) with the pallid, mitred, inhuman, monsters of Church Power; and with a succession of ferocious or dotard queens and kings.—They did so contend, and at the last blood was stayed:—the priest was foiled; and England was freed!

England was freed! what does it not owe to the men (with all their faults) yes and to the women too, and the babes (for the priest loves always the most delicate victims) whose tears, and groans and patience; whose imprisonments and desolate wanderings; whose torments and lamentable deaths, were the price of its deliverance. This debt is strictly incalculable; not only because the benefits so obtained are more than can be distinctly reckoned; but because the happy consequences are even now in full flow over our own, and other countries; and are promising to run down with a swollen stream to all future times. Fairly may it be questioned whether if in that long struggle the Priest had vanquished the Puritan, England would not at this moment have been—as Spain! Fairly, we

say, and on solid ground of philosophical calculation may it be surmised, that if Church Power had then prevailed over its victims, not a residue of English liberty would have been saved. But the liberty of religion being once rescued, that most potent of all the elements of freedom, drawing with it, by an indissoluble alliance, all other elements, has preserved for our use and enjoyment whatever ennobles us among the nations—knowledge and philosophy—commerce and courage, with their attendant wealth and power;—as well as that political framework which has been the admiration and envy of the world.

England, we say, has, by the indulgent providence of God, been delivered from the worst of all evils:—the worst, because big with every other. Yet has it not been absolutely purged of the inveterate poison of spirtual arrogance. And how much soever the course of events, and the temper of the age, may seem to secure us against the return of the old usurpation, there is room to affirm that vigilance in this behalf should not for a moment be intermitted; and that all men, irrespectively of their regard to religion, should be awake and ready both to repel its insidious advances, and to drive it continually on to narrower and still narrower ground, until itself is fain to take a last leap into the pit whence first it issued.

But we return to our position. That the well remembered struggle between Conscience and Church Power, to the issue of which we owe all our liberties; and the still extant murmurs and restless movements of the same vanquished tyranny, operate very powerfully, and in a manner much to be lamented, upon our religious parties. The Dissident, habituated, and taught to think of his dissidence as a laudable and necessary opposition to ecclesiastical usurpation, and feeling, too, the close and constant connex-

ion between religious and civil liberty, loses sight, almost entirely, of the *religious mischiefs* of division. A bold assertion of the rights of Conscience is his praise, his pride, and his nobility; for he deems it a bright nobility to stand as successor to the men who, at the dearest price, bought religious liberty for England. Separation, in his view, is decked with a nimbus of glory. Nothing can dissolve in his mind the association between the recollection of worthies, more illustrious than dukedoms could have made them, and this same separation, which it has now become his turn to support.

Thus advantaged by its association with the most animating emotions, the idea of *restricted and party communion* contains little or nothing which shocks the Christian sentiments of the pious dissident;—much less of the irreligious one: and even in reference to other bodies, where no plea remains for calling up the virtue of resistance to tyranny, the same feeling extends itself. Division, if indeed granted to be abstractedly an evil, is seen always through the golden mist which exhales from many not-forgotten fields of glorious triumph!

A very easy and natural confusion of thought persuades any one who holds the doctrine of the right of men to think and act for themselves in matters of religion with the most absolute freedom—that this civil privilege contains within itself, or conveys *a religious right*, or a right as member of the Church of Christ, to act with the same disregard of the opinions, or the welfare, or the prejudices, of his brethren. On all occasions where forbearance might be called for, the Briton kindles, and the Christian gives way. "Is not," he will say, "the right of private judgment surrendered, or made nugatory, when it is asked of me to hold a private conviction in abeyance, or to remit its

agitation, for the mere preservation of external harmony?"

The *English feeling* of absolute personal independence, both in opinions and conduct, has so thoroughly dislodged from the minds and hearts of many the *Christian feeling* of submission, for the sake of love and peace—much more of submission or deference to pastoral authority, that the greatest imaginable revolution must take place in the religious community, before it can be hoped that the capital and simple principles of church communion will be generally recognised and bowed to. Nothing seems at present to indicate the approach of any such favourable change among us.

Meanwhile it is natural to ask—Why should not the Christians of the new world avail themselves of the signal advantages they enjoy for reconsidering those faulty principles of combination which their good ancestors carried with them, when they fled from strife and cruelty to the wilderness? Were those times such as ought to warrant the belief that the principles of church order were well understood? Would a man choose to take to himself any opinion, unexamined, from the age when church tyranny made wise men mad? But although the ecclesiastical doctrines of the Puritans have received in modern times, some practical corrections, this system—parent of division, has never yet been subjected to full and calm examination. What is the fact in America?—not that all who profess and love the main articles of the Gospel are one and undistinguished, and are exercising vigorous and charitable discipline against evil doers, and declared heretics:—but that they are still segregated—Christians from Christians, under odious designations! In England insuperable difficulties, or difficulties too great for our measure of grace and wisdom, stand in the way of any comprehensive

movements: or our habits and notions are too inveterate to be meddled with. We must move on, and dwindle in petty companies. But what apology can be framed for the perpetuation of schism in America? none that is not trivial.

We hear with joy (or hope) of certain rapid advances of piety among the transatlantic churches. No misgiving will haunt our joy, or damp our hope, when it shall be reported, that the Christians of the United States have so received the "unction from above," as to bring them to concord—visible as well as cordial.

XXI.

THE FEW NOBLE.

"Not many Noble."

THE most conspicuous or notable praise of Christianity is its fitness to benefit the undistinguished mass of mankind. How, indeed, could we recognise that as a message from the Supreme Beneficence which seemed to address itself principally to those who already hold the advantages of intelligence and refinement? On the contrary, how can we fail to admit that the Gospel is "from heaven," when we see that it turns away from the illustrious to the ignoble; from the rich to the poor; from the wise to the ignorant; in a word—from the few to the many?

Furthermore, the doctrine of Christ challenges a peculiar commendation, inasmuch as it is seen to confer the substantial benefits of virtue and wisdom upon the vulgar multitude of mankind, (if indeed a phrase like this ought to find a place at all when THE GOSPEL is mentioned,) without being solicitous to rid itself of the humiliations and the contumelies—we might almost say, the *contaminations*, it meets with, while allaying itself to the ignorance, the rudeness of manners, and the many ungracious prejudices that ordinarily deform the lower conditions of life. Christianity does not stand on high ground, and aloof, and say to the abject, the illiterate, and the impure —"Put off your unseemly garb of misery, and learn civility and courteousness, before I can approach your company."—But rather, with the courage of true goodness,

it consents to sustain a thousand disgraces so that it may, by any means, bring salvation to the homes of the wretched—Nor is this all; for the Gospel makes men good and wise (effectively so) without removing always the unsightly adjuncts of poverty and ignorance; and after it has fixed its abode with the poor, continues to disregard the mortifying circumstances that so much annoy fastidious pride.

But is then this doctrine—which consorts so commonly with the ignoble, as if by affinity of tastes, or incapacity to occupy a higher sphere—in itself ignoble, or destitute of the elements of grandeur? Who will say that the purity of its ethics has no greatness or dignity;—or that its discovery of eternal life has no sublimity;—or its exhibition of Mercy—mercy purchased so as it was, no beauty?—Or has the only faultless theology that mankind has known, no glory?—All, even its enemies, confess, in these several particulars, that the religion of the Scriptures displays a majesty unrivalled. The common and familiar converse, therefore, which it holds with the lowest conditions, instead of being justly alledged as a proof of a kindred abjectness, should be used as an argument of that genuine magnanimity that might be expected in what descends from heaven, and is scarcely or never found in what is born of earth.

And yet, while the Gospel, ordinarily, so much shrouds its intrinsic dignity, and embraces many humiliations (as its Author veiled his proper glory when he dwelt in flesh) it does not fail, in some few instances, to expand itself more at large, and to develope, in full symmetry, its essential greatness. Not indeed that the doctrine of Christ can owe any illustration to the native excellencies of human nature, as if to an independent power; or can derive ad-

vantage from a foreign source. But "every good and perfect gift" coming from above, and the original faculties and the endowments of the mind being immediately from God, when many gifts of various kinds—original, adventitious, and heavenly, meet in the same subject, those of each kind receive from their combination with the others a new and extraordinary splendour:—natural intelligence, and greatness or nobility of soul, advantaged by culture and secular embellishments, shine, as with a divine light, when made luminous by the indwelling of the Spirit; and this Spirit shows the more conspicuously His presence and power, when the "living temple" is of spacious construction, and is adorned with costly materials and many offerings. Here and there is found one who admits the religion of heaven in its own manner, and imbibes its sublimity and beauty without detriment, and glorifies God, the giver of all, by displaying the triple nobility of Nature, Culture, and Faith.

Might it be said the royal Image and Superscription which, by the trituration and corrosion it undergoes in the common world, becomes continually less and less distinct, is from time to time issued afresh, and from a new die; and all men, in the sharp impression and inimitable skill of the work, recognise the fine gold of the realm; and are much emboldened in their reliance upon the vigilance and good faith of the unseen Administrator of affairs? Certain it is that the style and tone of piety, in every age (or in private circles) is in great degree dependent upon the character and impulse that are imparted to the mass of Christians by a few distinguished men;—or perhaps by one such. How often have the deep and secret conflicts, purposes, conquests, of an illustrious spirit, when divulged after it has quitted earth, spread like a leaven of new life

through the entire commonwealth of Christianity; and, as a means, or second cause, has enhanced (in various degress) almost all the then existing piety of the church! Nor should we be safe in affirming that even the most obscure or remote portions of the general body receive *no* advantage in such instances; for moral and religious influence, like a subtle ether, attenuates itself until it is no longer noticeable by human observation. Much less can we set bounds *in time* to this influence; for piety is, if we might so speak, peculiarly *traditive*, and perpetuates and repeats itself, through the longest lines of transmission, from age to age.

Not one of the common prejudices that spring from the depravity of the heart, is more notably absurd than that which attributes to the individual, as ground of arrogance and vanity, his natural endowments of mind or body. The secret motives that dispose mankind to boast more of those advantages which they have had no part in procuring for themselves, than of those which have been the fruits of industry, are indeed not hard to be analyzed, or accounted for. Nevertheless, though the error be easily fallen into, it is manifestly preposterous, for a man to assume *as a merit* those distinctions, which he could no more win for himself, than confer upon another.

The very proper jealousy which Christian minds entertain of this error, which is at once a proud prejudice, and a folly—leads them somewhat too far, when, in order to cut off effectually the occasion of vain-glorious self-love, they almost refuse to give due praise and credit to God's own bestowments. There is a peril and a difficulty, it is true, in this quarter; nevertheless it must never be forgotten, much less denied, that great mental capacity, and the power of accumulating knowledge, and nobleness of spirit—as

well as the graces and embellishments of the exterior man —are gifts, and inestimable gifts of God. And if we all saw things, whether spiritual or natural, with a clear eye —an eye purged of the films of earth, none would be in danger of becoming vain on account of endowments or powers the rudiments of which he brought with him into the world. Shall indeed a reasonable being challenge to himself, as author, any distinction or advantage which was elaborated in the womb, and is older than his consciousness?—The future life shall root out this prejudice, effectually and for ever; and then all spirits, with open eye beholding the Fountain of good, shall glorify the Creator in whatsoever he bestows upon the creature.

And besides:—the largest capacity, and the most noble dispositions, are but *an approximation* to the proper standard and true symmetry of human nature; and if they seem to reach perfection in one or more points, never fail to fall far short of it in others. It is true that, if men generally did only conceive of the grandeur of their destiny as immortal, every human being would at once become noble and magnanimous both in sentiment and conduct. A conception so large as this in fact, enters few minds; and very few attain that greatness of mind which, even when carried to the utmost, is still less than reason would well authenticate. But it is not the want of that elevation of soul which should naturally spring from a consciousness of immortality, and of relationship to God, to be accounted an unspeakable defect?—Small praise then surely, just to possess that, which not to possess is a preposterous fault! This is in fact the rule whereby great minds are accustomed to estimate their own superiority; and while employing their power of comprehension and abstraction in conversing with ideas of absolute perfection, they acquire, from

the comparison thence arising, a modesty like that of childhood; and are, notwithstanding any comparison with other men, always alive to genuine sense of imperfection and ignorance.

Although there are noble dispositions that do not imply so much, yet the true ideal of magnanimity demands an *original* predominance of the two faculties that are the prerogative of man, and which, by their developements, distinguish one race of men from another, viz: the powers of Abstraction and Imagination; and these, not single or disproportioned, but duly balanced and blended. It is the *first* which disengages the mind from those partial aspects of things that fix the attention of inferior understandings. It is the power and disposition to discern, in every fact or event, not so much its single import, as its universal meaning, and its relation to general principles, which fills the mind always with the most comprehensive conceptions. It is this power which leads on always from the less perfect, towards the more perfect;—from the accidental and abjunctive, to the universal; or from the exterior to the interior; from the specious to the real; and in so doing, not merely gives the reasoning faculty its proper and necessary advantage, but dispels and puts out of view a thousand distracting motives. Calmness and intellectual courage, not less than perspicacity, are the fruit of the power of abstraction.

And yet if alone, or if it be the paramount faculty of the mind, this power makes a man nothing more than an intellectualist of a particular class;—a mathematician, physiologist, or dialectician. And as such he may be altogether wanting in greatness of mind. But the philosophic faculty becomes, if we might so speak, luminous, and expands itself too much over an incomparably larger

surface, and moves with far more celerity, when it is commingled, in a just proportion, with the powers of imagination. It is the sense of BEAUTY (in the extended meaning of the word) and of sublimity it is the perception of harmony, of richness, of magnificence, and of symmetry, which elevates the man of abstruse reasoning, to a range whence he contemplates all circles of human knowledge, and avails himself of the fruits of all: he is then aborigen of all spheres of thought; and finds himself at home and at ease in every region. On the other hand, destitute of the power of abstraction, or the philosophic faculty, the man of imagination is an artist only;—a caterer of transient delights; or a mere sentimentalist, whose entire existence is as unimportant as the pleasures of a summer's evening. But the two faculties in combination—as congenial, yet antagonist powers, exert, one upon the other, an influence of enhancement, as well as of refinement.—That faculty of which the object is TRUTH, imparts to that which the object is BEAUTY, severity of taste; and so renders every pleasure it approves at once intense and permanent: while in return, the latter conveys to the former all the elasticity, and force, and gust of enjoyment, which are characteristic of ripe manhood, when compared with withered age. It has been the men of *one faculty* to whom mankind stands indebted for particular benefits in art or science; but it is those alone who have combined the two, whom all mankind regards with grateful reverence.

And yet these are mere rudiments of genuine magnanimity; indispensable indeed, but insufficient if alone. For human nature is not complete unless it be enamoured of Goodness, as well as of Truth and Beauty; but this can be only when its own moral senses are sound: virtue, there-

fore, is a proper element of greatness. Destitute of the sense of rectitude and of the emotions belonging to that sense, or deprived of them by actual pravity of soul—Mind could hardly be deemed more than a brute power;—a mere mechanism of cogitation. Or if it be in active hostility to those sentiments, it is monstrous; and the more there should be of intelligence in such a being, the more also of horrid deformity. In fact, if we take as a whole whatever may be known by the human mind, one half, and the most important cannot be discerned without the aid of the moral faculty. Love—which is virtue in act—opens upon the mind the perception of truths as real and valid as any of the principles of mathematical science. Or Love may be termed the mode in which the highest and most universal truths subsist in the soul;—how then can any spirit be great from which must be deducted that world of things that is understood only by virtue and love?—Selfishness is an incalculable error: malignity, or sensuality, is a thick darkness. We must then utterly deny the praise of magnanimity to one, whatever his capacity, whose whole existence lies within the compass of his personal desires; or whose ambition grasps nothing greater than his single advantage.

There is a sort of energy, leading to enterprise and achievement, and giving support also to fortitude, of which it is hard to say whether it most belongs to the body or the mind;—it has perhaps its roots in the former, and thence draws its supplies, and there holds its grasp; but yet rises and spreads, and displays itself in the higher intellectual element. Without this force (whether it is to be accounted physical or mental) the soul may indeed conceive of that which is great, and may sigh and yearn after it; but still will be left in the rear of action, to contemn itself for its continual failures.

The adventitious advantages of personal dignity, bodily strength, and equable health, must not be spoken of in the same absolute terms, as conditions of greatness of soul; any more than nobility of birth; or the habits that belong to high station and affluence. Nevertheless it were an equal error to affirm of these advantages, on the one hand, that they are indispensable to magnanimous sentiments; or on the other, that they have no affinity therewith; or no influence in enhancing generous emotions. Nature and history contradict both suppositions. In many signal instances that might be named, MIND, as if purposely to disparage, or put contempt upon its humble companion—MATTER, has burst through the restraints and humiliations of a feeble, diseased, or distorted form, by force of a plentitude of the highest qualities; or again as if to make mockery of exterior graces, it has withheld every virtue and every gift from those whose symmetry and dignity of person seemed to fit them for thrones. And yet the uneasiness or painful sense of *unfitness* of which every one is conscious while such instances are before the eye, is itself a proof that nature teaches us to look for some correspondence between the interior and the exterior man; —or that it is her general rule to make the *visible* a true symbol of the *invisible.*

Actual concernment with important affairs—a real conflict with difficulties, as well as some achieved enterprises of danger or labour, though not of course to be enumerated among the *elements* of magnanimity, must be peremptorily affirmed as indispensable to its existence otherwise than as a mere rudiment, or germ. The collision of the mind with the perils and toils of real life, may fairly be assumed as a test of true greatness; because our definition of it includes both power, and the propensity to exert

it; for without this ingredient we retain nothing that might serve to distinguish between the idle contemplatist, or the mere poet, or the retired man of abstraction, and him whom we deem magnanimous. Energy that achieves nothing, is a febrile restlessness;—not the power of health. Greatness that can establish its pretensions by no ostensible and commensurate performances, is hardly to be known from imbecile ambition.

Yet is there always a counterpoise in great minds between the desire of action—the vigorous passion for achievement, on the one part, and that tendency, on the other, to repose—that taste for peace—that calm residence of the soul upon its centre, which impels it (with an apparent inconsistency) now to stand forth, and now to recede from the noise and confusion of the world. We might find plenty of great minds, if we could but relinquish, in our definition, this special characteristic—a tranquil taste, and *the capability of repose.* In every circle one may meet with men of prodigious energy, and of indefatigable zeal;—but they are such as can exist only exteriorly, or in action:—rest, when it must be taken, is with them an abrupt cessation of their intellectual life;—it is not another and a graceful mode of it. Will it seem romantic to affirm that the characteristic serenity of minds truly great is an instinct of the soul, indicating its destiny to a future and endless life?—for even though that life were believed to consist of a perpetuity of action; nevertheless the anticipation of it, fraught as it is with the notion of infinity, and of absolute perfection, must always be attended with the idea of peace and stillness.

If it yet seems as if some one infallible characteristic of genuine magnanimity were wanting, we should at once name unalterable modesty, as that mark. That it is so

might be argued not merely from the evidence of facts, establishing the point that great men have always shone with this grace, as assume it *a priori*, inasmuch as elevation and grandeur of soul consists in, or is derived form, an habitual contemplation of universal principles. This habit of the mind contains a tacit comparison which is of the very essence of humility. The spirit that has no modesty, manifestly has no sense of abstract excellence: and therefore can have no greatness; or, at least, is not holding converse with things greater than itself;—hence it grasps nothing that might aid it to spring up, or rise above its actual level.

The modesty of great minds, like their tendency to rest, generates an apparent inconsistency at which vulgar observers are amazed:—it is a dissonance, full of sweetness and power; but pleasing to well-taught ears. For just as there is (as we have already said) an alternation between the love of repose and the desire of action; so is there also in noble spirits a counterpoise between the consciousness of superior power and native high quality, and this characteristic humility or meekness. Such are the changes of a spring day, when the sun, returning to our hemisphere and about to put forth anew the generative fervour of summer, is seen contending with the heavy exhalations of earth. For awhile these vapours gather over the heavens and darken the landscape; but at length they divide, and even while tepid showers are falling, the source of light is revealed in all his effulgence:—and yet only to be soon again veiled in the mists his own rays have drawn into the sky.

False or affected greatness, which consists in the tumid expansion of a meagre substance, may assume all appearances of the true sooner than this of modesty; which either

it will not attempt, or attempting, will utterly fail to reach. Or while acting the part of modesty, will so exhibit its restlessness and impatience, as to forfeit the praise of serenity. Thus the two inseparable characteristics of genuine magnanimity are denied to all pretenders.

In nothing are great and inferior minds more certainly distinguished, than in that peculiar composite sentiment with which the former habitually contemplate mankind at large. We say *composite* sentiments; because it brings together, with singular harmony, all the separate ingredients of magnanimity which we have just enumerated. In the analogous feeling of pretenders to greatness, some one or more of these ingredients is wanting. The man of enormous ambition, splended as his qualities may seem, can make out no valid claim to the *affection* of his fellowmen, even if he may compel their admiration; for he looks upon them simply as the means or materials by which to effect, or upon which to build the spacious edifice of his pride. Or if beneficence takes its turn in his emotions, it is taught to give way instantly when it might embarrass the dominant passion. The vague theorist too whose schemes are as large as continents, and who, one would say, has built his nests high as the clouds, so that he looks down upon empires as a man does upon a colony of ants;—he is great only in his closet: he legislates for nations not a few;—schools senates;—rebukes kings;—revises all that is faulty in the institutions of all lands;—throws the blame of every human woe upon statues. Yes, his pen is quite a paternal sceptre, wielded for the benefit of the species! Alas, all this sovereign philanthrophy is bottled in his inkhorn! look for it elsewhere; in his conduct or his self denials:—you find it not. This huge good will to men is nothing better than the *mode* of unmeas-

urable vanity; and if you want a proof that it is so, see how cunningly the sage avails himself of the slender knowledge of the men of his country or age, so as to make himself appear the author and inventor of that which he has just known how to steal from foreign quarters.

The philanthropy that is genuine and *great* yearns to act, and must spend itself in some effort, effectual or not, to diffuse benefits. The habit of abstraction, which is the primary rudiment of his character, informed by the bright conceptions, and animated by the emotions which his imagination furnishes, leads him to meditate, as his favourite theme, upon the welfare of communities; or of his species at large. And he is enough of the philosopher to look with indulgence upon the errors and faults of man; but not so a philosopher as to make these errors and faults the subject of caustic merriment. He is poet enough to feel a kindling sympathy with whatever is beautiful or gracious in the social system; but not so a poet as to turn away his eye from the unpleasing realities of human degradation. He is the man of action, energy, courage, fortitude; but his velocity is not that of a machine, which, is serviceable or destructive blindly, for he has long pondered whatever he attempts, and his motive is always so sound and so admirable, that even his failures or defeats are brighter than other men's successes: and when thwarted in his endeavours, men see in his serenity that it was good-will to his species, not ambition, that moved the attempt.

Nothing can be less like arrogance or conceit than the feeling with which a great mind inwardly confesses its unquestioned superiority. Such is that *respect* for *humanity* which the man of magnanimous sentiments entertains, that it is with sincere pain he recognises at any

time in other men those deficiencies, or that meanness, or baseness, or frivolity, whence he might draw a comparison in his own favour. As often as any such comparison obtrudes itself, gratulation gives way to shame, or compassion for others. It is to him a heavy grievance that men should be blinded by prejudice, perverted by passion, corrupted by interest;—that they should be ignorant;—infirm in judgment;—sordid in conduct. The levity of mankind, and their corruption, alike distress him, for they controvert that feeling he would fain always cherish, of complacency towards all things, and of esteem for all. Tell him to think with pleasure of his own expansion of mind and nobility of temper:—this is but in another manner to enumerate the dishonours of his fellow-men!

Conceptions and emotions of this order are justly deemed *romantic* when not found in combination with energy and consistency of conduct:—that is to say, when they are *mere* conceptions, and *mere* emotions. But the man who thinks them so, however recommended by the active virtues;—the man who secretly contemns the humility and humanity of great minds as if it were a *weakness*, may be sure that there is a region of thought of which he has no more knowledge than the mole has of the vastness and splendour of the upper skies, where the eagle soars.

XXII.

RUDIMENT OF CHRISTIAN MAGNANIMITY.

"Let him that Glorieth, Glory in the Lord."

And yet the greatness of man, at the best, is but greatness fallen and restored: and the utmost he can attain to in the present state is so much of dignity as may beseem one who, rightfully challenging the honours of high birth and illustrious destiny, is rescued from a degradation he has sustained, and is replaced in a condition of hope and advancement. In such a case, every sentiment should have respect to the history and to the true circumstances of the person. Genuine magnanimity will never prompt a man to hush up his past misfortunes, or disgraces; much less to deny the obligation he is under to whoever has saved him from penury, obloquy, or danger. On the contrary, true generosity must shows itself in the readiness with which such confessions are made, and the debt of gratitude acknowledged. It is the part only of the basest spirits to affect oblivion of humiliating facts which all the world is acquainted with.

It must then be deemed a great disparagement when the subject of any signal misfortune—or benefit, is himself unconscious of the fact; or very imperfectly sensible of it; —and such ignorance is always to be deplored in proportion to the native generosity or nobleness of the individual in question. When vulgar souls are unapprised of signal services done them, we thing the less of it, inasmuch as, if known, there would probably be little acknowledgment

of the favour ;—nay, perhaps, some offensive expression of ingratitude. But we long to inform the magnanimous of their obligations, if it were only that the most generous emotions of which human nature is susceptible, might be set in flow.

Ignorance of the cause and extent of his misery is the aggravation, universally, of the mischief that has happened to man ; and, contrary to what might have been imagined, this ignorance attaches to the most elevated spirits, not less than to the most rude. Indeed those very qualities and powers of mind which might lead such to feel and deplore the deterioration of their moral state, and to accept frankly and joyfully the succour offered from above, seem rather to form a blind, intercepting the prospect of things greater and more excellent, that might be attained.

If facts did not prove the contrary, how confidently should we expect that all vigorous and generous minds would, with an instantaneous conviction, or as if by the instinct of a native sympathy, embrace the great principles of religion !—how natural that such should rush toward the hope of immortal happiness ; should be foremost to accept the proffered friendship of the Most High ; should yearn to get released from the defilements of sin ; and especially that, from the impulse of a kindred generosity, and with the ingenuousness that distinguishes noble tempers, they should admire and receive the grace—divinely free—that has been obtained for mankind by the vicarious work of the Great Deliverer ! All this would naturally happen if the moral mischief that infests us were less than it is ; or did not include a derangement or obscuration of every faculty, and a perversion of every sentiment.

This obscuration, both of the intellectual and moral powers—common to all men, and not less gross in the

instance of highly-gifted individuals than in others; but often more so, is to be dispelled in one manner only:—that is to say, when Sovereign Power from on high restores the soul to soundness of health, and brings it back to the place and dignity whence it has declined. That this restoration is properly attributable to a Divine Agency, is confessed by every one who is the subject of it: nor is the confession made merely in deference to the inspired testimony; but springs from the impulse of consciousness, which dares not—cannot attribute so great and happy a change to any inferior cause.

Whatever therefore may, in any case, be the measure of intelligence, how noble soever the pre-existing dispositions, how entire soever the ingenuousness and simplicity of the mind, when a cordial submission to the grace of the Gospel is spoken of, there is included, without exception or distinction, the presence and agency of the Divine Spirit. The explicit affirmations of Scripture demand as much;—and the concurrence of all, who by experience are qualified to speak on the subject, corroborates the same truth.

But when once this renovation is effected, and when the many prejudices, and the crude suppositions which the pride of the heart, or its vicious propensities, have generated, are dispersed, the gifts of nature, whether intellectual or moral, will make themselves apparent. And first of all—superior mental power shows itself in the preliminary of a full conviction of the truth of Christianity. Alternations of doubt and confidence, *where evidence is complete*, are characteristic of a feeble understanding; and it belongs too to a confused one, to rest, from year to year, in a sort of equable haze of semi-persuasion; as it were on the very borders of light, when certainty is attainable. Mul-

titudes of Chrirtians, it may be feared, are Christians of this degree ;—occupants of the *penumbra* of faith ; and believers or sceptics, according to the direction in which they happen at the moment to be looking—towards the region of day or of night. A vigorous mind is impatient of any such states of incertitude :—it acquiesces indeed calmly in the necessity of the case, when evidence is imperfect or inconclusive ; and will then be as jealous of dogmatism, as otherwise it would of indecision. But how should it restrain its active force, or how repress that irresistible desire—the desire of knowledge, when ample materials are before it ; when every species of proof in redundance offers itself to examination ;—when circuitous and coincident testimony is seen to run on in the same general direction with that which is explicit ; so that to remain in ignorance, or to be the victim of delusion is a culpable weakness, preposterous as it is unhappy ?

On a subject like that of the christian evidences, a man of powerful and comprehensive mind, after he has once made himself master of the argument, feels on all occasions that the approach of doubt or hesitation is nothing but a symptom of some momentary debility or torpor of the reasoning faculty ; and in alarm, not for the question, but for the integrity of his own powers, he rouses a manly strength, and shakes off the drowsy impotency that had crept upon him. That this sort of vigorous faith does not more often show itself among Christians, is because the two elements whence it should spring are but rarely united : for on the one hand, those whose fervent piety gives them an interior or experimental conviction of the truth of the Scriptures, are not very often, in any good degree, familiar with the documentary argument ; or perhaps have not the intellectual power requsite for appreciating

its force. And on the other hand, the few who do possess these advantages, too often labour under a coldness of heart, or a secularity of character, which makes Christianity and its principal doctrines distasteful, or unintelligible; so that their rational conviction, how strong soever it may be, never rests within them at ease; but is always in conflict with this or that prejudice, or lurking suspicion. Or it may be, that the irksome familiarity of professional engagements in religion has checked every spiritual sense; or that an enfeebling of the judgment, produced by the accumulation of ponderous erudition, actually disables the mind from grasping or retaining its hold of great and serious truths.

And is there not room to say, that what may be termed *secular* vigour of mind—vigour trained and exercised either on the theatre of public life, or within the precincts of natural science, when animated by genuine piety, produces an unblenching faith which those might envy whose duties in religion at once demand the most unshaken presuasion, and tend to impair it?

The same intellectual energy, governed and enlivened by the fervour and ingenuousness of a cordial faith, carries the mind forward in full course, clear of all frivolous sophisms, to the great facts, whether more or less mysterious, that are distinctly affirmed or implied in the Scriptures. Convinced that these books bear with them the authority that must attach to a miraculous communication of knowledge from God to man, a sound, philosophic, and upright mind dares not for a moment hesitate to regard them as altogether *trustworthy* in their mode and style of conveying the principles they were actually intended to impart. There is an alert sagacity—there is a fine and mobile penetration, which we naturally call into exercise when

we have to do (as we suppose) with any who are endeavouring either to perplex or to deceive us. But to open the Bible in this spirit—to take the Book as from the hand of God, and then to look at it aloof, and with caution, as if throughout it were illusory and enigmatical, is the worst of all impieties, as well as the greatest possible inconsistency.

The Creator, having already spoken intelligibly to man by the display of His wisdom and power in the visible world, which sets forth conspicuously the first truths of theology, would seem Himself to inculpate or disparage that existing mode of instruction if, when He condescends to teach us mouth to mouth, He were to tell us of nothing that had not already been imparted in the elder method. The Scriptures, because attended with an operose economy of supernatural attestations, are to be presumed to contain high matters, and such, that no less an apparatus could properly have conveyed them. Nor will an enlarged and generous spirit, already awakened to discern the glory of Him—the Incomprehensible Being, with whom we have to do, deem those things to be unworthy of Heaven which the inspired writers, in the calm simplicity of truth, open to our faith and gratitude.

In like manner as it may readily be conceived that, when the human spirit enters upon the untrodden fields of a higher world, though the economy of that sphere, and the stupendous objects or movements belonging to it, are all as amazing as they are new; nevertheless, not one of those objects—not one of those novel acts, fails to find some principle of sympathy or alliance in the native ideas or emotions of the new-born child of immortality; and this for the plain reason, that an absolute harmony or unity of principle pervades, as well the intellectual, as the material

universe :—so, for the same reason, whatever elements, or whatever transactions of that upper world are now brought within our knowledge by the Scriptures, though invested, as we might well anticipate, with the majesty and awful greatness of infinity, are yet found to have a thorough analogy with our human nature ; and meet, in its original principles, with corresponding rules of thinking, or modes of feeling ; and (if the phrase might be permitted) instantly make themselves *at home* in our bosoms.

Whoever has freely and gratefully admitted into his heart the first truth of Christianity—the atonement for sin, accomplished by the Son of God, will grant that he finds in it nothing that does not recommend itself to his reason ; when reason is the most serene, and the most happily in correspondence with pure and ingenuous emotions. If ever he doubts the reality of this doctrine, or loses his perception of its excellence, it is precisely when the vivacity of every better sentiment has been hurt by the prevalence of earthly passions, or the influence of secular engagements.

The great principle of the vicarious sufferings of Christ, and the correlative truth of his proper divinity, may either be thus confessed as congruous with our most ennobling emotions ; or may be acquiesced in, as the consequence of an intimate perception of the unalterable rectitude of the Divine nature ; and then this perception, though it deepens the emotions of contrition and humiliation, is felt, in the very same degree, to impart to it a qualification, and a taste, fitting it to rise into a sphere of existence ineffably higher than heretofore it had at all imagined ; much less attained to. A true knowledge of God, as unchangeably just, and absolutely holy, while, in a sense, it oppresses the spirit, exalts it far more. But it can not any such in-

fluence until the means are discerned by which Justice and mercy may be reconciled. The very same spiritual perceptions that cast the soul into the depth of contrition, awaken it also to a consciousness of celestial excellence and glory. The agonies of penitence are nothing else than a bursting forth in the heart of those higher principles (originally planted there, but long subverted) which, when fully expanded, shall place man in communion with the most exalted natures; and not only so, but open to him free access to the Source of all Good. Destitute of these genuine elements of greatness, the magnanimity of man is false, or fustrates, or spends and exhales in momentary efforts, and on unworthy occasions.

And yet how shall any such true and intimate perception of the Divine purity and inflexible rectitude, bringing with it, as it must, a proportionate sense of personal guilt, peril, and degradation, be at all entertained by the human mind, much less be cherished, until the hope of pardon, and of friendship with God, has been seen to rest upon the most solid ground? That this harmony of spiritual principles exists nowhere but in the doctrine of the atonement, might be sufficiently argued from the fact, that the rejection of the doctrine is always coincident with indistinct and derogatory notions of the moral attributes of the Deity. Nothing can sever these rudiments of the religious life—a consistent and elevated conception of the Divine character—genuine compunction on account of guilt and depravity; and (if hope entertained at all) a grateful acquiescence in the doctrine of substitution.

The affirmation of this necessary connexion may be deemed gratuitous, and nugatory; and will so be deemed by those who themselves are destitute of the primary element of piety. Nevertheless it would not be difficult to

embarrass the oppugner (unless he took the ground of Atheism) in a thousand contradictions;—much in the same manner that a man who had been blind from his birth might, especially if conversant with science, have it demonstrated to him, that there is actually a faculty by means of which knowledge is gained of remote objects; though for him in any degree to conceive of such a faculty would be utterly impossible. In such a case the blind man would be hedged in between abstract demonstration, and the involuntary scepticism that belongs to ignorance.

The capital truth of the propitiatory sacrifice offered for mankind by the Son of God, gives scope to the greatest intellectual power, by a peculiarity that distinguishes the higher themes of religious meditation. In the several departments of secular philosophy, the objects of abstract thought lie compactly within the range of the faculty they are to exercise; and this faculty, so far from being aided in its efforts by the sensitive principles of the soul, demands that these should be quiescent while it is in action. Hence arises that common partition of minds into the two classes of the ratiocinative, and the sensitive; nor is any thing more rare than a combination of the two, in any very eminent degree.

But the peculiarity of the primary truth of the Christian system is this—That though it be matter of abstraction, the *materials* of cogitation wait to be presented to the reasoning powers by the moral sense; and this sense must first be spiritually quickened before it can perform its office. It is only when an intimate perception is had of the Divine rectitude and purity; and only in proportion to the vivacity of such perceptions, that the relations of justice and goodness can be discerned, or be subjected to reason. Apart from this spirtual discernment, the mental

process, although it may be carried on with a semblance of logical consistency, has lost its substance (just as real quantities are forgotten in the working of algebraic signs) and the current of ideas quickly subsides into the lower channel of mere speculation. Nothing less than the highest sensibility of the soul—its plentitude of feeling, its participation of that Divine nature which is Love, can give it fully the power to draw conclusions, on this high theme, from premises, or to measure the true bearing of its abstract notions.

There are certain trains of reasoning on abstruse matters, wherein either the subject is so ethereal, or the connexion of principles so evanscent, or so recondite, that they are not at all to be pursued except when the intellectual powers are in a state of the very highest vigour. Hence naturally, it happens, that the conclusions which have been reached or assented to in the hour of mental strength and perspicacity, come to be questioned, or very dimly apprehended, in the season of languor that succeeds :—there is a vacillation—or an alternation of knowledge and doubt; just because the mind cannot permanently keep its position on the height which sometimes it attains. But in these cases the rise and fall of conviction takes place exclusively within the circle of the reasoning powers.

The mental variation, or *parallax*, of which now we are speaking, is quite of a different sort. For it is not that the objects in question are in themselves subtile, or unsubstantial, or that the relations that connect them are slender or flickering: yet they are not to be seen by the native light of the human mind. The soul must, in this case, be illuminated from above before reason can do its work. It is as when the traveller who has reached an alpine height, at the breaking of day, looks around him

upon a far extended sea of shapeless mists. Shall he believe that nothing is on the right hand and on the left but vague obscurity and unimportant vapours?—No; for the sun soon scatters these exhalations; and the stupendous masses of the mountains stand out in all their proper strength of colouring, and their breadth and solidity of form! Now nothing is indistinct or questionable; and although, even while he is gazing, the clouds should reassemble upon the bosom of the hills, and leave him, as if insulated, on his pinnacle of observation, he would not, any the more, assent to one who should tell him that what lately he had contemplated was an airy phantasm.

Uncultured and ingenuous minds happily escape certain perplexities which, groundless as they are, often obstruct the course of excursive, and even of powerful understandings; nor is there any way of escape from such embarrassments except that which a radiance from heaven makes known. If, for example, the mind falters at the ineffable doctrine of the divine dignity of Him who was "Son of man" and "Son of God;" faith is reassured when a perception is obtained of the unalterable glory of the moral perfections of God: and while that perception enkindles penitence and fear, it is most distinctly felt that, if the fallen are indeed to be rescued and the guilty absolved, nothing of less magnitude than the Christian economy can reconcile the demands of rectitude with the course of mercy. Not one of the correlative notions on which the Gospel turns can possibly be surrendered, or at all abated. To give up the first of them, is nothing less than for the soul to dismiss its high conception of purity and bliss;—it is for itself to fall back into that abyss of darkness and dismay whence lately it emerged. Most distinctly is it discerned that the only tenable hope of progressive happiness,

and the only worthy idea of the future expansion and perfection of the powers of human nature, coincide precisely with an enlargement of this same spiritual knowledge of the Divine purity, and with an increasing intensity of the emotions that thence arise. Now without presuming to ask—whether the salvation of man might in any other way than by the propitiatory work of Christ have been reconciled with the Divine attributes; it is enough that the stupendous scheme of mercy opened in the Gospel—a scheme which human minds would never have devised, manifestly brings every contrariety to unison, and may cordially be embraced, as the true harmony of heaven.

Not indeed as if the field of divine science could so be traversed and surveyed by the human faculties, or as if the actual procedures of the Supreme Intelligence could so be made matter of antecedent calculation, as that men might be qualified to say—"Thus, and thus only, could Infinite Wisdom attain its purposes."—All argumentation that rests on any such grounds merits reprobation. But as natural philosophy presents many arrangements in the material system of which the use and excellence may be distinctly seen although, *a priori* no such combinations would ever have been thought of as possible; or have been deemed fit, even if possible; so, in divine science may we very intelligently consent to the wisdom of known rules and principles; though the higher, or abstract reason that determines them, and whence they might have been foreknown, far surpasses our powers of thought. In these, sacred themes distinct convictions may be attained which, because they result from *a spiritual sense* of the perfections of God, are not at all to be conveyed from mind to mind, or embodied in any forms of language. Nevertheless they are as valid as the best of those conclusions that are drawn from the first elements of knowledge.

But if extraordinary intellectual powers may find a scope in the principal themes of religion, and if the exercise of them to good advantage demands always the accompaniment of spiritual convictions; there is also need of that *generous simplicity of sentiment* which distinguishes a magnanimous spirit from the mere reasoner. When the process of rigid analysis is applied to subjects that stretch far beyond the range of human knowledge, nothing but embarrassment can be the result; and to gain freedom we must return to those simple sentiments that are, on many occasions, better guides than abstruse reasoning. Thus it is that a frigid scrutiny of the ideas brought together in the scheme of human redemption generates, often, a misgiving, as if there must be a want of substance in the ingenuous expressions employed by the Apostles, when they speak of the grace and love of the Saviour in "giving himself a ransom for many;" or as if, after the several shares of the Divine and human natures are allotted, nothing remains which can distinctly be held as adequate motive of affectionate gratitude. Any such idea is the consequence of attempting to analyse that of which none of the elements come within our grasp. A feeling of this sort may be surmised to lurk beneath a certain style of pulpit exaggeration, employed perhaps sometimes, to conceal the perplexities of the mind, or to hide that chasm in the heart which should be filled by devout affections.

A cold scientific *distribution* of the parts of the satisfaction once offered for sins by the Divine Mediator, and which so much annoys ingenuous minds in books of divinity, finds no precedent in the style of the Apostles. They (better taught than logicians could teach them) spoke on all occasions of their Lord, as the Saviour of the world in a manner which has no *reason* if we forget his human-

ity; and no *piety* if we deny his divinity; and no *force*, if we attempt in any manner to sever the one from the other. The polemic term θεάνθρωπως, happy and comprehensive as it may seem, was not used by them, because they felt no need of it; or had never thought of so distinguishing their conception of the Person of Christ as is implied in the construction of a phrase of this sort. Like some other term now unhappily become almost indispensable, it points to heresy; and would fall out of usage if there were no sophistry in the world, and no gainsayers.

The inspired writers never pause when they speak of Christ, as if they must use caution in rightly assigning the terms they employ. The characteristic of their manner is unity, rather than abtruse precision. Unconscious of embarrassment, they ascribe, in the fullest and clearest terms, to the Saviour of men, emotions and modes of action which metaphysical severity refuses to predicate of the eternal and unchangeable Deity; in the same breath, and without a note of surprise, attribute to him perfections which it were blasphemy to challenge for any but the Possessor of omniscience, omnipotence, and eternity.

This harmony of style on a point where scepticism always stumbles, and where superstition always runs into extravagance, ought to be deemed a signal proof of the presence of a wisdom more than human. A vigorous understanding, and a temper that spurns the sinuosities of unbelief, when guided by the same Spirit of Truth, confidently follows on the path trodden by Apostles. No unsound sentiment need be imputed, when it is said, that a great mind—informed from above, will, *in a peculiar manner*, catch by sympathy the greatness—the magnanimity, which belongs to the character, and actions of the Saviour of the world. In this character, and in these actions—in these words of grace, and deeds of mercy, scope is

found, and more than scope, for the profoundest emotions which the spirit of man may at all sustain. The mind reaches no limit on this ground: the objects of its meditation, by a combination mysterious truly—possess at once all the distinctness and vivacity that belongs to what is human, and all the depth and height that attach to what is divine. Although indeed the attempt must always be fruitless to penetrate the incomprehensible union of the divine and human nature—the actual harmony which that union produced is forcibly and clearly perceived by the moral sense;—and eminently so by minds of extraordinary power. Scarcely a sentence recorded by the evangelists, and scarcely an action narrated, fails to present, with more or less distinctness and in wondrous *unison*, the divine and human attributes of him who spake "as never man spake." Remove from the discources of Jesus, and from his conduct, the mystery of his Person, and every just idea of fitness is shocked;—nay, the entire narrative becomes incredible; or rather let us say, that, if the mind be vigorous and *sane*, it is incomparably easier to admit the divinity of Christ, than to reject it, and read the Gospels without being confounded and perplexed.

Controversy (inevitable though it be) spoils whatever it affects. The Controversy of the Church with the impugners of the first truth of Christianity has, if we might use the allusion, quite chafed the resplendent surface of Revealed Religion, so that the impression we should otherwise have received from the Gospel narrative is vastly impaired. Our long continued litigation with sophists has drawn us away from *the native force*, to *the bare grammatical value* of certain words and phrases. But the native force of language is nothing more than its *true value*, in all cases when an ingenuous writer adapts

himself only to ingenuous readers: and the denuded meaning which criticism evolves, bears much the same relation to the genuine sense of the writer, which a sear anatomical preparation, with its shrivelled fibres, and blanched bones, bears to the living man. If the believer suffers by this means, the heretic much more: and it will seldom (perhaps never) be found that the naked grammatical power of language will avail any thing with a mind that has lost, or thrown aside, all its sensibility to natural impressions. The language of legal instruments is indeed constructed on the principle of *insuring* a definite sense, against the utmost endeavours of chicanery: and yet, with all its redundancies, it often fails to effect this object. Knaves find a flaw—and triumph over common sense and justice. Truly it was in another spirit that the Apostles wrote and spoke; and whoever will not listen to them in their own spirit, must go away with his error as his punishment.

Has not a punitive debility invaded the mind that can meditate upon the character of Him whom the evangelists describe—can muse upon his pregnant words, can imagine the awful serenity and gentle mercy of his tones—can stand by while he calls the dead from the bier, or the grave—can behold him stilling the winds—can hear him remit sins, or announce the judgment which himself is to administer—or claim and accept the adoration of his followers;—can follow him at length to the mount of death;—can listen when, about to ascend to his throne, he challenges to himself universal dominion; and after thus walking side by side with one such as was Jesus, can profess to have seen nothing, to have heard nothing, but what is on the level of mere humanity? No blindness is like the blindness of such a mind! Infatuation, when it extends so far, is not simple error;—but disease.

Once discerned, accepted, and devoutly entertained—the mediatorial character and vicarious work of Christ becomes an exclusive object, and generates an exclusive motive. All admiration, all gratitude, all affection, must converge upon this one centre. And if he who so believes is indeed susceptible of magnanimous sentiments, and capable of magnanimous conduct, then will he, the more gladly than others, forget every pretension, and deny every ambition; and though in the circle of his fellow-men, he might glory, will "glory only in the Lord."

XXIII.

THE DISSOLUTION OF HUMAN NATURE.

"It is Appointed to all Men once to Die."

We are free to assume that the separation of the elements of human nature at death is a regular stage in the economy of the moral world. This may be believed, notwithstanding the fact of its having supervened in consequence of the offence of the first man. Death is indeed penal, and therefore must in one sense be deemed an *after-act* in the order of the Divine procedures: nevertheless it was not merely foreseen, but no doubt predetermined for the accomplishment of some specific purpose. It is true that the breaking up of the animal machinery under the appalling circumstances that attend it, does more than dimly display its *primary reason*, and speaks of transgression, and of the anger of Heaven. But many analogies in nature, as well as what we know of the rules of the Divine government, lead us to suppose that there is a further purpose appended to the primary one of declaring the displeasure of God against sin.

If death be punitive, so likewise is the necessity imposed upon man of toiling for his subsistence: and so is that constitution which secures the perpetuation of the species. And yet the most signal of all the natural benefits which he receives from his Maker are, directly or indirectly, consequent upon both the law of labour, and the sexual relationship. These appointments were a curse in *form;* but a blessing in *fact*. Or if it be still true that each of

the three preserves and displays its punitive character, it is not less true of the *second* and the *third* (the entire operation of which we can observe) that the penalty crowns itself with praise, in the good it confers; a direct analogy would lead us then to presume as much concerning the *first*. Or it would authorize the conclusion that, as the necessity of labour, and the mutual dependence of the sexes, are found to be the occasion of advancement and of delight, *when man is wise and humane;* though of misery, when he is ignorant and ferocious; so death secures some *special advantage* to the good; though to the bad it can show none but its primary vindictive intention.

The many intimations we gather from the Scriptures on this subject forbid it to be thought that death is a blank pause in the course of the human system, or a fruitless arrest and interruption of the process of that intellectual and moral life which had so lately commenced. On the contrary, the notices of the inspired volume imply that it is rather the means of evolving certain higher principles of that life, with a view to the ultimate advancement of our nature. If we might speak, for a moment, of that state of which death is the introduction, as a stage in the NATURAL HISTORY OF MAN, we should presume it to be a season of germination, during which preparatives are going on for a new construction of the elements of life, to more advantage, or on a more expanded model. If the spiritual and the physical parts of our nature are to be thus severed, and to be held in disunion during an extended period, and yet are afterwards to be recomposed; it would seem probable that the spiritual part (which survives) will then be occupied in bringing to maturity some of those powers, or in cherishing those habits that were the most obstruc-

ted by the movements of the physical machinery (which falls to the dust); or in other words, that a *new balance of the powers* of human nature is contemplated, for which preparations must be made by allowing a long and uninterrupted play to certain faculties, as freed from others.

In attempting, for a moment, an inquiry on this subject, it will be neither necessary nor proper to advance upon the arduous ground of abstruse or metaphysical science; since, except with a view to practical inferences, a theme like this would not here be introduced. And assuredly *practicable inferences* in matters of religion must be drawn from facts or principles known to all men; or at least familiarly intelligible to all, when clearly stated.

Every one then, how little soever he may be conversant with Intellectual Philosophy, must be conscious of the reality of the distinction commonly made between those emotions that belong to the imagination, and those that spring from what is termed—the Moral Sense. Nothing is much more trite or simple than this classification of our feelings. As for example: at one moment we apply to the objects which may be actually or mentally before us, the terms *beautiful, or deformed; sublime, or mean; graceful magnificent, terrific, harmonious, discordant.* And these words connect themselves instantly with the sensations, whether pleasurable or uneasy, which such objects awaken. But it is on occasions altogether of another sort that the terms *good, or evil; benign, or malignant; generous, or base, pure, or corrupt;* are employed: and our feelings of complacency or repugnance, in these latter instances, manifestly belong to a faculty quite distinct from the imagination.

The rudest understanding perceives the essential dissimilarity of these two classes of our emotions. And even

the illiterate and the vulgar so far observe the difference in their use of language, as to prove that it is broad and real; not nice or theoretic.

Now no one can need to have it proved to him, that piety and virtue take their range altogether among the emotions of the latter, not among those of the former class. No one imagines that the conceptions he may form (how just soever they may be) of the Immensity, the Eternity, or the Omnipotence of the Supreme Being, will of themselves make him a religious man: he may conceive all that is sublime, or magnificent, or awful, quite independently of any affections that ought to be called virtuous. We must think of God as absolutely Holy—as Just, and Good, if we would worship, love and serve him:—that is to say, the emotions of the *moral sense* must be awakened if we are to become religious.

The Imagination and the Moral Emotions are not only very distinct; but they are very differently related to the physical organization: and this difference few persons can have failed to notice. Both alike are attended with some correspondent movement in the animal frame, more or less conspicuous. And both alike are liable to be enhanced or repressed by causes that belong to the animal structure:—in both classes there is *action* and *reaction*, between Mind and Matter. But the difference is this—That the emotions which strictly attach to the *moral sense*, or to the notion of good and evil, of right and wrong, and which have no connexion either with the imagination, or the selfish passions, though they affect the physical frame, when intense, and either quicken or retard the ordinary movements of life, do so in a manner that is tranquil and *safe*, both to the body and the mind;—excitements of this sort are always *limited;* nor are they liable to rapid

augmentations, such as would endanger either health or reason. Indeed in most cases the animal excitement or agitation is greater *in the first moments of moral emotion*, than afterwards ; and though, on a sudden occasion of this sort, the pulse may be accelerated, and the spirits hurried, this movement subsides, even while the inward sentiment is becoming more and more acute.

It is otherwise with those emotions that quicken the imagination ; especially with such of them as are very vivid and profound. These stand so much more intimately connected with the laws of animal life, or in other words, the affinity or sympathy between mind and matter is in this department, so immediate, that a dangerous correspondence takes place between the mental emotion and the bodily excitement. And not only so ; but as long as the emotion continues, the excitement goes on to heighten ; and if the former be at all enhanced, the latter mounts up with fearful rapidity. Strong imaginative emotions at once shake the structure of animal life, and endanger the integrity of reason ; and they do so it seems, because, instead of spending their force outwardly (as the affections of the moral sense do), they bear inwardly, more and more, upon the centre of the soul ; and so accumulate their force every moment, and aggravate its physical effects.

All this is understood by persons of a highly sensitive temperament ; who, if they are prudent, carefully abstain from surrendering themselves to any feelings that include impressions of wonder, terror, or sublimity ; or even of admiration, or dramatic sympathy. That rapid progression which is characteristic of these feelings quickly bears away the resistance of reason, and gains a mastery over the will. Damage to the mind, or to the body, or to both, ensues, unless the exciting cause be presently removed.

And while the milder and more agreeable imaginative sentiments debilitate the intellectual and animal systems—if too frequently indulged, or indulged to excess; the stronger and more painful emotions rend and distract both. Ideas of vastness, infinity, and irresistible power, are to be admitted only with caution, if the mind be highly susceptible of their influence. Such minds are conscious, often, that they are approaching the brink of an abyss, whence they must hastily retire—or be lost. The eye, the ear, the heart, must be diverted, and filled with whatever is common, familiar, or trivial.

These well-known facts are all we need now have to do with; nor are we obliged to descend beneath the surface, as if to explore the occult conformation of human nature. Instead of doing so, we must note another remarkable difference between the Moral and Imaginative emotions, resulting from their connexion severally with the body. It is this—that, *when both are in activity together*, the latter, in consequence, as it seems, of their stronger affinity with animal life, almost always, and very quickly, prevail over the former, and expel them from the soul; the moral fades, and the imaginative brightens.

Nothing is more frequent than such combinations: the structure of the visible world, in all its parts, produces them. Impressions of grandeur or beauty, of sublimity, of power, of destructive force, or of malignant violence, are conveyed often by the very same objects, or on the same occasions, which excite either the gentler affections of love, gratitude, or pity; or the more stern sentiments of rectitude, and truth. In such instances, ordinarily, the first species of feeling intimately combines itself with the second; so that to sever the two is almost impracticable;

as a giant closely grasps him whom he is about to throw to the earth, and crush. But when in combination, the better element is apt to merge or disappear. Hence arises the fatal facility wherewith imaginative spirits pass over from the solid ground of piety and virtue, to the illusory region of enthusiastic excitement. It is not true that the religious and virtuous affections have to make head only against animal desires, or malignant passions; for they must also maintain their ground in opposition to the more insidious encroachments of imaginative impressions; and these, intimately mingled as they are with all our feelings (to subserve an important purpose) give no warning of inimical intention.

If we duly appreciate the *advantage* or power, possessed by imaginative emotions, in consequence of their close alliance with the animal frame, we must reflect upon what not seldom takes place in sleep, when the voluntary functions being suspended, and the susceptibility of the nervous system greatly diminished, images of sublimity or terror, such as, while waking, the mind dares not dwell upon, pass in still pomp before the mental vision. Through the hushed palace of fancy a vast or threatening pageant moves on—powerless and innoxious. Or if some faint excitement accompanies the dream, it is incomparably less than would be produced by the same spectacle, *attended by the same impression of reality*, in a waking hour. In presence of the most appalling ideal objects, the spirit —conscious, yet quiescent, and as if it knew itself to be a secure spectator of the scene, looks on, or even takes its sport in freakish mood, with fantastic or ludicrous conceptions; and seems to enjoy a pastime—now with laughable absurdities, now with gigantic horrors!

Thus it appears that the Imagination, though not a

whit less active during sleep than at other times (perhaps more so) has lost then, by the quiescence of the animal functions, its power of domineering over the system. In truth we ought here to admire the beneficent contrivance which has so blended the human frame as that, when the controlling faculty of reason is suspended, the liability to perilous agitation from ideal objects is also in abeyance. If it were otherwise, our dreams would be our masters; nay, the most cruel tyrants; and we should be liable to start from sleep to madness.

And now let it be supposed (we advance merely an hypothesis) that it is an indispensable part of the education of the spirit, with a view to its ultimate destiny, to bring it, if we might so speak, within and among the stupendous inner-movements of the universe;—or to afford it a full view of objects, personages, and actions, the merest glimpse of which, constituted as we are of matter and mind, would dissever the frail structure of nature;—or would at least so excite the imagination as to overpower entirely the moral sense. But it is this very sense of good and evil—this moral perception, and the tranquil affections attaching thereto, that are to be brought into activity, and to be employed upon the amazing scenes of the INTERIOR WORLD.

By our alliance with matter we are detained on the surface of things; and are conversant only with semblances, and with effects. But it remains for us, perhaps, to become conversant with substances, and causes: we must go and contemplate the deep secret of God's empire. We must be led up and down among the *works*, and gaze upon the reason of things. And yet this intuition is to produce its whole effect, undisturbed and unmixed, upon the faculties which constitute man a moral and responsi-

ble being. These faculties, therefore, are to be set at large from their affinity with all those intermediate sentiments which, in the present state form the *amalgam* of mind and matter.

The separate spirit is then (on this supposition) to be thrown upon the play of its AFFECTIONS, whether these be benign or malign—pure or depraved; and it is moreover to be thrown upon them in presence of objects of the most stupendous magnitude. In place of the measured and mingled emotions of the present life, there are to be encountered, in the next stage of our existence, excitements of overwhelming force; and all of one quality. And amid them, the soul—quiescent in regard to what might move it to wonder, or terror, is to be nakedly sensitive to the MORAL QUALITY of what it beholds. The notions of right and wrong—of good and evil;—the emotions of love or hatred—of joy or sorrow—of complacency or compunction which here take turns for a moment, or for an hour, with a thousand divers affections, and so are always abated, and very quickly diverted, shall there hold undisputed empire—shall be countervailed by no rival, no antagonist power. Human nature, thus reduced to its most simple element, shall exist in one mood only—that of an intense conciousness of—its own moral condition!

The whole economy of revealed religion hinges on the doctrine that the commixture of good and evil we see around us, belongs to the present state alone; and shall quite disappear in the next. That is to say, that the abhorrent principles which here, by a sort of violence, are held in combination, shall when the temporary purpose of their union is accomplished, divide, to right and left, and with irresistible avulsion fly off to opposite quarters. If so, it is only natural to suppose that each new comer upon

that region of separate elements shall pass, as if by a physical necessity, to the side he is allied to, whether for the better or the worse. The sphere that encircles whatever is holy, and that which embraces all evil, must draw to themselves, severally, all particles of kindred quality.—Nothing can there float at large; but must fall in upon its proper centre—and so abide.

But an absolute partition of human spirits, like this, may seem not to bear analogy with the present order of things, wherein no such *conspicuous distinction* offers itself to our perceptions, as might be made the ground of a classification so simple. What soul is so base as to retain no particle of goodness? or what so pure, as to be free wholly from alloy? The Scriptures solve this difficulty; and while they affirm, in the most positive manner, the future division of the good and evil, indicate plainly the rule on which it shall proceed. If merits and defects, virtues and vices, were, in the instance of each human spirit, to be summoned up and balanced, (the supposition is absurd,) and the fate of each to be determined according to the preponderance of good or evil, it must happen in innumerable cases that a decision so momentous would turn upon an incalculably minute excess of the preponderating quality.

The scriptural doctrine of two states—good and evil, can never be conceived of as the issue of the human system, without admitting some rule far more absolute and simple than that of a balance of merits. No controversy can arise concerning this necessary rule. Of every human spirit it may be said that it posseses, or not, that affection to God which, when freed from the embarrassments that here surround us, will spring up toward its object—will break away, exultant, from every defilement; and con-

nect the created to the uncreated Spirit, between which a real alliance had already taken place. Has then the soul at the moment when its active powers are broken up, and when it is launched upon the severed elements of good and evil, been quickened toward the Moral Perfections of the Supreme Being? Has it yet entertained, or not, the rudiment of love, of loyality, and of submission to the divine government? Is it affiliated to God; or is it estranged and in rebellion? Does it abhor the contamination of its present state? Has it sympathy with the worship that encircles the throne of the Most High; or is it destitute both of the emotions, and of the habits, of grateful and joyous adoration?

What is the conception which, individually, we entertain of future felicity? Is God the desired centre and fountain of the happiness we think of; or does the mind draw its idea of heaven (if at all it thinks of heaven) with atheistic perversity, from those elements of pleasure which the present life affords? Is the soul alive to God or not? The answer to these questions must discriminate spirit from spirit, when each, in its moral element only, enters the world where moral elements are parted.

Every one might then readily imagine the state into which the dissolution of the body must plunge him, by conceiving of himself as stript of all faculties, and all emotions, but those that belong to the moral sentiments; and as so confronted with the unsullied brightness of the Divine Majesty. To die, is to come—denuded of all but conscience, into the open presence of the Holy One.

XXIV.

THE STATE OF SOULS.

"They all Live unto God."

The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of *the body* implies far more than was ever contained in the conjectures of sages, or of poets, who thought of nothing better, in their conception of an after-life, than a dream-like leisure—dim and unproductive, which has no affinity with the actual principles of human nature.

We must say almost the same of the common notion of Chrstians on this subject, who, although they are right, so far as they follow the suggestions of the devout sentiments, fall very far short of that idea of the ultimate state of man which the Scriptures authorize, when they think of immortality only as an elysium—more pure and bright than that of the Greeks. Piety seizes upon the *principal element* of eternal life, and neglects all beside. But this notion which contains one idea merely, though the principle, is strictly applicable only to that preparatory state, in which the *rudiment* of human nature alone survives; —it very imperfectly corresponds with the ultimate, or restored and mature state, wherein the rudiments gather around it again the various constituents of intellectual, moral and physical existence.

The tendency to subtilize in whatever is future and unknown, has carried the meditations of Christians wide of the track upon which the intimations of Scripture, fairly pursued, would lead us. The reorganization of the body

implies the restoration of the mutual dependency of mind and matter;—implies, that man shall again, as at first, conform himself to the laws of an external world;—shall blend in his own nature the diverse elements of the natural and the spiritual system;—shall entertain, once more, those *mixed sentiments* that result from such a union;—shall, in a word, become again, and for ever, a creature of action, desire, advancement;—of knowledge, enterprise, and achievement. He shall move in a sphere that will demand from him forethought, courage, and wisdom; as well as give play to his affections.

All this might be distinctly inferred from those passages of the Inspired Volume which speak of the after life. But nothing of the sort belongs to *the state of dissolution*, which retains only the first rudiment of existence, and in which active powers, as well as wants, are suspended. The season of *denudation* must certainly possess a character altogether unlike that which precedes, or that which follows it; nor can it well be thought to include action, or progression, or change; which imply the working of the parts or functions of human nature, one upon the other; and therefore demand complexity, and *construction* of elements.

Something, clearly, must be assumed as constituting the *ultimate principle* of our nature:—or that towards which all other faculties tend, and to which they stand related as means. It were most irrational to name as an ultimate principle, any power which is *subservient*, and which is exerted always with a reference to some ulterior purpose. For example; the senses, the appetites, and the instincts of the animal frame, are plainly nothing more than instruments, of which no explanation can be given until something beyond themselves is taken into account.

The reasoning faculty, also, not less than the senses, or the bodily instincts, is always subservient to some end. Reason labours to achieve a particular purpose, or to resolve a given doubt, and is impelled by a motive derived from that purpose. Reason then is not the rudiment of human nature. With even less appearance of truth could we assign any such honour to Memory, or Imagination. As well affirm that a man exists and acts, only that he may keep a diary of his movements; or that the *record* is the motive of the *life*.

We can come home to nothing in our survey of human nature, but to the affections and moral emotions, which are not subservient; and are not governed by ulterior purposes. It is upon these that the soul may *repose*. We advance a step then. If the moral sentiments and the affections are the prime principles of our nature, and if their actual condition, or the habits that attach to them, determine the character, they must, in a sovereign manner, decide the fate of every one—for the better or the worse, in that moment when the spirit enters upon the region where no susceptibilities are awake; or, which is the same thing, where no objects are found but such as affect the moral powers. If, when the connexion with matter is dissolved, an immediate consciousness is to be had of the Divine Presence, there can be no more room left for mixed or ambiguous moral sentiments. The spirit, quick, throughout with the feeling of good and evil, is surrounded on every side with the GREAT OBJECT of all such feelings; even as the mote that swims in the brightness of the upper skies, is encompassed with the effulgence of noon. To DIE, is to burst upon the blaze of Uncreated Light, and to be sensitive to its beams;—and to nothing else!

Among those numerous passages of the Sacred Volume which bear upon the separate state, few, if any, will be found, that do not directly convey, or indirectly authenticate the belief, that the realm of the dead—of the pious dead, is in a special manner the scene of PERPETUAL WORSHIP. It is there that the devout affections, undisturbed by other faculties, are incessantly in efflux. Adoration and love, it is true, are found in all states or stages of intelligent existence; but in the place of souls, worship is the one occupation;—shall we say that it is the unchanging *mode* of that rudimental life?—Of the pious dead it may, on this supposition, be affirmed, in a sense peculiar or characteristic, that they—"all live unto God." Whatever may be the special ground of argument in our Lord's reply to the Sadducees, the emphatic phrase he employs when he speaks of the patriarchs, must be granted to convey the idea, we now assume. "Abraham and his faithful sons are not extinct, as your doctrine supposes; for, long after their disappearance from earth, Jehovah affirms his actual relationship to them, and uses it as the motive of his gracious procedures towards their descendants:—they all LIVE UNTO GOD. Shall God then, in whose presence they exist, fail to fulfil the promise he had made them?"

The many dim phrases that are scattered over the surface of the Hebrew Scriptures, and of which the reader of modern versions takes little or no account; but which make allusion to the Invisible World, are all in harmony with the same notion. The fathers are "gone into Peace:—they abide "under the shadow of the Almighty"—who is "the dwelling-place" of his people, "through all generations;"—they remain "in *His secret chamber*" (the holy of holies): they dwell "in his Tabernacle;"—or "stand

in his Pavilion;"—and are there "the expectants of Jehovah," continually watching the movements of his hand."

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews favours, by obscure intimations, as well as by the purport of his argument, the Jewish opinion that the Tabernacle, and the worship established by Moses in the Arabian desert, was a *symbolic model* of the invisible economy of spirits. In framing it, Moses was commanded to keep in mind every particular of the pattern (*model*) "shewed him in the Mount;" and it is not improbable that a careful and erudite consideration of the Mosaic Liturgical Institute might give some distinctness to our conceptions of that state—the state into which the few brief days of mortal life are to bring every "true worshipper." It is very easy to discern in the Tabernacle service *first*, a proximate or external and secular intention, which reached its end in its immediate influence upon the people. But besides this, and compatibly therewith (as all expositors but the most sceptical admit) the same worship held forth, from age to age, a mute prophecy of "good things to come;" that is to say, of the mediatorial scheme, afterwards to be brought into effect, and made known. Yet a *third* intention (as we suppose) ran through every article of the "worldly sanctuary"—adumbrating the unearthly and spiritual system. Thus in the farthest recess of that Sacred Pavilion of the God and King of Israel, was displayed the visible splendour of the Divine Presence:—high above it, without, and in view of all, towered the cloudy column, alternately dark and resplendent. Before the Shechinah crouched the Cherubic symbols of the *incessant adoration* of the celestial orders. The tokens of the mediatorial covenant —the *insignia* of the spiritual kingdom, rested at the foot of the throne. To this inner chamber the Mediator

alone had access; and there, by his intercession, maintained propitious intercourse between the Divine Majesty and the remoter worshippers. Without the veil were seen the seven lamps—the cheering radiance of Spiritual Illumination; and thence also went up the perpetual incense of prayer. Far spread around this "House not made with hands"—not raised by labour, or of solid materials, were ranged the assembled thousands of Israel, in devout expectation; while they took part in the loud and responsive anthem of praise. "Thither the tribes went up—every one of them appeared before God in Zion."

To this invisible Tabernacle, and to this perpetual liturgy, and to this expectation, St. Paul, as we believe, made allusion when, before Agrippa, he spoke of the "twelve-tribe body (the complement of true Israelites) as intently and incessantly worshipping God in hope of a happy resurrection, promised to the Fathers"*—a promise never made, or never *officially* made to *them on earth:* (it was reserved for the Messiah to promulgate authoritatively, in this world, the doctrine of the life to come:)—but conveyed to them, on their entrance upon the world of souls; and there they, "not having yet received the promise," but waiting through the destined lapse of ages, "keep their Sabbath," until He "whose memorial is with them," shall arise suddenly from his Throne within the veil, and come forth to accomplish the "redemption of the body."

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* "And now I stand accused on account of a hope in the promise given by God to the fathers:—even the very same which is the object of the expectation of the twelve tribes (our Church) now employed in perpetual and intent worship."—*ἐν ἐκτενείᾳ νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν λατρεῦον.*

The worship of the world of spirits is declared to be subjected to the conditions of the Mediatorial scheme.—Christ "lived, and died, and revived"—that is to say, passed in due course over all the ground of human existence, that he might, *as an experienced Leader*, "exercise domination both over the dead and the living." He too is emphatically styled—"Shepherd and Bishop of souls;" and the Lord of Paradise—"holding the keys of Hades;" and having overthrown the tyrant of the invisible world. In the apocalyptic visions He appears, once and again, surrounded by the great company of expectant spirits, to whom he administers consolations. Nevertheless, though the Divine Majesty is in that world to be approached through him who is the "way unto the Father," it is reasonable to believe that the state after death will be one of great advancement in relation to the sensible, or rather *unambiguous* perception of the Divine Being. Let it be granted that the office of MEDIATOR implies, necessarily, so long as it endures, a reserve and concealment on the part of God:—so, while the priesthood of Aaron came between Jehovah and the people, the Shechinah abode within the veil;—yet do the worshippers enjoy such evidence of the presence of God as sets them free entirely from the discouragements of earthly worship. The ancient Israel, though they might not gaze upon the "excellent glory" that blazed upon the mercy-seat and the cherubim, beheld at all times the pillar of cloud and fire, which declared that the King was with his people.

And it may well be believed that the human spirit, disengaged from animal organization, becomes conscious of God in a manner that leaves no room thenceforward either for testimony in proof of the great truth, or for argument. If these two theorems could be proposed to us antecedently

to experience, and the question put—"Whether is easier, for an intelligent nature to become immediately conscious of the Supreme Intelligence; or for it to be consciously conjoined with matter, and its properties?" would not reason determine in favour of the first? And yet, if this connexion with matter is actually to be effected, there seems to be necessarily implied therein a loss, for the time, of the immediate perception of God. That is to say—in descending to a close alliance with matter, so as to be affected by its properties, and to affect them by its volitions, MIND surrenders its *native perceptions* of Him who is a Spirit. If it be so, then of course a physical impossibility stands in the way of our truly conceiving of that immediate perception of God which our present alliance with matter intercepts. A spirit not yet embodied might as well conceive of *weight, hardness, colour, sound,* as a spirit not yet disembodied imagine the *sense* it is ere long to have of the SPIRITUAL BEING. Yet analogy would lead us to suppose that, if the conviction we now possess of the reality of the external world be strong—so strong that we never seriously entertain a doubt of it, the future consciousness of the Divine existence—the knowledge of His presence, will be incomparably more vivid and more potent. —Yes—that this consciousness shall encircle and absorb the soul. If mind could so intimately converse with a subsistence foreign to itself, how intimately shall it converse with that subsistence with which it is natively homogeneous!—There shall we "know, even as we are known."

And yet, though we must always fail in attempting to conceive of the future mode of existence, there must belong to the present state certain connective rudiments of the next. And we have assurance that when the devout

affections—informed, enlivened, elevated, by the Spirit who "helpeth our infirmities" are immediately concerned with *their proper objects*—the Moral Perfections of the Divine Nature, a true approximation is taking place to that intimate converse to which the dissolution of the body shall give room. Christians, though they can offer no external demonstration of the fact, or such as they might spread before others, are entitled to say—"Truly our fellowship is with the Father and the Son:"—and this genuine persuasion, more vivid than any argument, bears them through the sorrows and fears of the present state. It is by this consciousness that they "endure as seeing Him who is invisible."

We must here note, in passing, the essential folly of the enthusiast, who contemning the true and purifying discernment of God in the brightness of his moral attributes, seeks in its stead certain flashes of the animal spirits, which he deems to be better proof of the presence of God than "joy, and peace, and assurance in the Spirit." He turns away from the divine converse of the heart with its Regenerator; and reverts, as a child or novice, to the earthly elements of turbulent or passionate emotion. Give him but a bauble, and he will at any time throw away the jewel. He would be more delighted could you promise him a dazzling vision, which should have nothing in it but a blaze, than with that glory which shineth into the hearts of the children of God, admitting them to behold the true image of God, in the person of his Son. And if you call in question the genuineness of this, his bad preference, he says—"You deny all that is divine and peculiar in the Gospel, and oppugn the truth that Christ manifests himself to his people as he does not to the world."

The ordinary process of knowledge, or that natural order whereby, in the present state (revelation apart) we attain any conception of God, is an ascent from the natural to the moral attributes. In following certain abstract notions we infer his Eternity, and Infinitude;—and then we read the displays of his power, and wisdom, and bounty in the visible world; and we go on to assign to him—Holiness and Goodness. This method regulates, in great measure, all our theological notions and religious sentiments. We dwell much upon that which in truth is secondary, or mediate; and see only at a distance that which is primary and essential. By the ladder of reason we have gone up to behold the Most High; and so are we apt to frequent the same artificial line of approach, even when we draw near for worship.

The Spirit of Grace takes us by another path, and shews us that the Moral Perfections are the end and reason of the Natural. And who can doubt but that, when matter and its dark symbols are done with—that which is principal shall seem so? In bursting from the confinement of the body, the spirit shall (with amazement perhaps) in a moment reverse the order of its old conceptions; and almost cease to think of Omnipotence, Eternity, Infinitude, while the more dominant notions of Purity, and Blessedness, and Love, fill the soul. This revolution must (if we might so say) immensely reduce *the apparent distance* between the created and Uncreated Mind: for so long as the first-named class of notions have principal possession of our thoughts, the impression that prevails is that of immeasurable disparity; and of course, the more we meditate on these themes, the more is such an impression enhanced. But though the disparity between God and his intelligent creatures is as absolute in the attributes of Goodness or

holiness, as in those of power and wisdom, there belongs to the former a homogeneity which affords ground of communion between God and man. The conversion of the heart to God is a bringing God nearer to us; for this reason, that we thenceforward think of Him more in His moral than His natural attributes. We approach the throne by a direct path, and in the stead of the mute awe which heretofore had held us far from the Incomprehensible Being, we admit an intimate and personal affection, not untruly symbolized by the relationship of children to a father.

The dissolution of the body must consummate this same approximation, if it has already had its commencement. Love, casting out fear, will then reach its climax; and all reclaimed souls shall drink of the "river of pleasures that makes glad the city of God." "All shall live unto God."

It were presumptuous and culpable to construct theories concerning that which is unknown, upon the ground merely of abstract analogies: nevertheless, so long as a due modesty is observed in such attempts, and especially while the dim imitations of Scripture are kept constantly in sight, mischief will hardly accrue from endeavouring to follow our meditation a step farther.

What then, we may ask, shall be the rule of rank or order in that invisible world? What the law of relative position? Shall an arbitrary or an accidental location be admitted; or shall there be an invariable prevalence of some principle, founded upon the reason of things, and the qualities of the subject? The latter, does it not seem the preferable supposition? At least it may be affirmed that all apparent confusion or irregularity results, in the present state (as might soon be proved) from the interaction of several causes upon more than one element. On the

contrary, absolute uniformity takes place, or which is the same thing—the juxta-position of things unlike and unequal is excluded, where *one or two causes operate upon a simple and single substance.* Now if there be truth in this maxim, (and corroborations might be drawn from all parts of nature, and from all the sciences,) then it would seem more than barely probable that, in the region to which souls are consigned, (those denuded rudiments of life,) each spirit shall fall into its rank, as if in obedience to the law of its actual affinity with the Divine Nature. Or as if the concentric circles of worship that embrace the Tabernacle of Glory should determine the position of all spirits, according to the rule of love and purity. How many those circles may be, or how vast the space they enclose, we know not. Perhaps the disparity in light and joy between the inner circles, and the remotest orbits, may be immense. These matters are all beyond surmise. Meanwhile, and until truth and knowledge burst upon us, we may each revert to the secrecy of the soul; and each may ask how such a law of rank as we have imagined, would affect his particular case? Or whether the habits of the mind, its ordinary and characteristic emotions, would bring it near to the Majesty in the heavens, or remove it to the very verge of the sphere of joy and hope—

—Yes, and who shall not put to himself the previous question, momentous as it is, whether the soul has yet at all acquired fitness for that state, which has no alternative, but to join in the perpetual worship, or to look to the Father of Spirits as a Stranger, and to the Omnipotent as an Adversary?

XXV.

THE THIRD HEAVENS.

"In thy Presence is Fulness of Joy:—at thy Right Hand are Pleasures for Evermore.

As without evangelical principles there can be no sound morality; so without the aid of heavenly meditation, morality, even if it be staunch and consistent, must want greatness, dignity, purity; nor can recommend itself by those shining graces that ought to adorn the religion of Christ. Our ordinary conduct is determined much more by the general tone of our feelings, than by the direct force of precepts and prohibitions. The heart is in a perilous state when the vulgar solicitations of appetite, interest, or pride, are encountered and opposed only by the *ultimate* or strongest motives that may be applicable to the occasion. Virtue ought to be defended at a greater distance from its centre than when it wrestles, hand to hand, with its opponent vices.

It is the frequent and intimate converse of the heart with things heavenly, that must impart to the soul higher tastes, and shed upon its stern principles the lustre of a pure and generous elevation. And if meditation of the future and invisible worlds be liable to any abuse, or may be likely to degenerate into insipid or presumptous conceits, it is only when the first principles of the Gospel are lost sight of. The contemplatist goes astray—when he forgets hinself, and his Guide; that is to say, when he muses idly of heaven, as if there had been no transgression, and were no Redemption. And the difficulty also, as well as the hazard of such attempts to rise above the

present scene, or to penetrate the invisible world, is enhanced, or is indeed rendered insuperable, when our actual position as those who have been *restored* is not kept in mind; but, on the contrary, is obviated while we look to Him who, as PRECURSOR, has trodden all the path of existence, even from the low starting-point of humanity, through death and Hades, to the upper region of perpetual pleasure.

Even supposing faculties and powers to be the same, far more may be achieved, in any line, by the aid of a capital invigorating motive, than without it: of this every one is conscious: and the truism is signally exemplified in the instance of the Christian, who, in proportion to his *personal assurance* of salvation finds that he can soar upwards, or bring home to his conceptions matters which once seemed too high to be approached. Apart from the hope of the Gospel, who is there that ruminates upon the felicity of heaven? Even if the human mind were better qualified than it is to engage in meditations of this sort, and were more disposed than it is to dwell upon such themes—the labour would want impulse, and would be idle and fruitless in its issue, unless connected in some distinct and satisfactory manner, with a personal expectation of becoming a sharer in the future happiness. Why do not men at large think of heaven? Why do not poets make immortal joy their constant theme? Alas, because neither men at large, nor the most gifted minds, discern the way thither, as open to themselves!

Reason assures us that the Supreme Being is (in the phrase of Scripture) "Blessed for evermore." He to whom belongs all power, wisdom, and goodness, doubtless exists in the unchangeable fruition of absolute felicity. And reason may also, on the most probable grounds assume

that the Sovereign Beneficence sits surrounded by myriads of beings, participating, so far as finite minds may do so in that felicity. Or to use the language of the Hebrew poet, it must be granted as a natural or necessary supposition—"That in the presence of God there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand perpetual pleasures."

Be it so:—but what is this to man? If in contemplation we ascend at any time to the high orbit of light and joy, how far must we lower the wing when we would return to earth! The human race seems to stand almost on the extreme confines of happiness; nor is there to be discerned any such general progression in the species toward a higher and better stage, as might assure us that we are drawing nearer (however slowly) to the centre of good. The bright conjectures of reason and imagination can only trouble us the more, when we bring them into contrast with whatever we see and know around us. Nothing relieves this gloom until He appears, who, laying aside uncreated glories, "was made flesh and dwelt among us." It is the Christian Mystery, and nothing else, that gives substance and reason to the meditation of things purer and better than earth.

It may be conjected that the Royal Poet had in view the entire circle of the universal realm, from its utmost verge to its centre, when (as in the person of Messiah) after surveying the long path of life, he looks to its termination on high, and thus concludes—"in thy presence is fulness of joy;—at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." The language is tropical, and perhaps has more than one allusion. But the most obvious of these (if indeed there be more than one) is to a kingdom or polity, consisting of many gradations or ranks, spread over an extensive surface, and in the metropolis of which are held the incessant festivities of Regal State. The

condition of oriental monarchies better illustrates the figure than any thing that is seen in modern and western countries. Let us look then to the widely-severed ranks of an Asiatic empire. There is first its wretched and vilified class, upon which the superincumbent structure of the social system presses so heavily as almost to crush existence;—often actually to crush it; and always to render life undesirable. The urgent wants of nature, never provided for beyond the present moment—the most abhorrent sustenance, furtively snatched from the dust; while contempt, servitude, and pain, stand by to imbitter the insufficient meal! Shall these abjects—these victims—these outcasts know any thing of pleasure? Yes, even these snatch a joy; for human nature does not readily throw off its instinct of happiness. But pleasure to such must be intemperate and frantic; because hurried and stolen:—the hour of enjoyment (if enjoyment it should be called) is as murky as it must be—hemmed in before and behind by necessities and woes. Or we may turn aside to gaze upon the hovel which serves as the last retreat of wretchedness, and where indolent misery, bred by Vice upon Despair, finds a home: to such (alas that in fact there are such) to such the common air has no balm—light of day no brightness—nature no boon. Spring, with its bright mornings and its flowers, and summer with its noons of fervour, and fruits, and pastimes, and autumn with its golden abundance and luxuries, bring no smile, no change:—the round of the year is a winter. What is that word *joy* to such?—they know it not even afar off, by sight or hearing: or if ever they taste a reckless bowl, it is one in which death has shed some new anguish for to-morrow.

To these unfortunates—the helots of mankind, more

or less numerous in every community, according to the viciousness or rectitude of its principles (absolutely wanting in none) succeeds the class that, as a broad foundation, sustains the edifice of society. But of this higher class all that can well be said is, that the most terrible evils are just kept at bay by incessant efforts: Now for a moment, perhaps, the Foe is driven to a little distance; and a breathing-time is secured. Hope alights at the threshold in her hurried course to bless more favoured homes. Comfort makes a longer stay. But we dare hardly speak of *happiness* as belonging to this stage of life; for life is still a warfare that has no truce.

In the third stage of society, as we ascend, man is found so far to have gained advantage upon want, as that his home is no longer its residence. Woe and fear do indeed visit his home; but existence is not the prey of either. Enjoyment is seen there, and courted daily. Pleasure and comfort are entertained. Ease and Indulgence are not unknown; and take their turn with serious cares.

But we must look higher for the climax of earthly good; and shall find it when we visit the palaces and halls where reside beauty, honour, favour; with art, splendour, revelry;—where the elastic power which high privilege draws from security and abundance gives grace to the human form, and seems to animate every faculty. In these mansions of delight, if Sorrow (treasonable intruder) ever sets his foot, he is instantly disguised in pomps and drapery, that his pallid visage and shrivelled form may not offend the eye—Even Death comes to palaces in an obsequious livery of plumes, and velvet, and cloth of gold!

In truth, PLEASURE is always *the law of life*, wherever power to make it so is possessed: and though this

order of things has justly become an object of reprobation to the moralist, because the pravity of man ordinarily brings pride, cruelty, and sensuality, to be the attendants upon pleasure; yet may there be read beneath this very perversion, great as it is, the native tendency or original purpose of our conformation. We learn to fear or to frown upon pleasure as an enemy, and to entertain joy with suspicion or caution; and we deem self-denial a prime part of wisdom. But this happens only because the world (and our hearts with it) has gone astray from the road of genuine felicity. It is not as if man was not made for felicity; but he was made for another sort than he now actually chooses. The lawless or frivolous pleasures of mankind are only *an ill sense*, put upon the language of nature. Let but the joy we seek be of celestial quality, and our pleasures such as ennoble and invigorate the soul, and then the true and ultimate purpose of existence is attained. Fulness of joy, and perpetuity of pleasure, were assuredly proposed as the *end* of that creation of which absolute Beneficence is the author.

Who can question that the several gradations of the intelligent universe rise in degrees of enjoyment, as they rise in degrees of power and virtue;—that at each ascent there is less of what is subservient, and more of what is primary;—less toil and danger; and more tranquillity and joy?—And thus must the progression advance, even to the mount of God—the Royal abode of eternal and unsullied Blessedness.

Or an allusion of a different kind may be supposed to have been contemplated by the Hebrew monarch.—When he said, "In thy presence is fulness of joy," he might be tacitly making comparison between the pure and cheerful worship of Jehovah, perpetually celebrated on

Mount Zion; and the worship—horrid and foul, of the surrounding nations. We very imperfectly imagine the force of such a contrast, as it must have presented itself to an Israelite of the early and brighter eras of Jewish history. In modern times we have so much learned to look upon idolatrous worship with mere contempt, or with contempt and loathing, that we do not even deign to institute a comparison between those extremes of truth and error, in matters of religion, that are still actually to be found in the world. The doctrine of the unity of God is the belief now of all civilized nations. Error on this capital point is the badge of degradation, of servitude, of imbecility; and the word *polytheist* may be taken as convertible with the terms *barbarian*, or *slave*. But it was not so with the ancient Israel: and the feelings of that nation of true worshippers must have been very unlike our own on this point. The great controversy of truth was maintained, single-handed, by the pastoral and agricultural tribes of the southern Syria, against all mankind beside. It was the Hebrew family (never, if a very few years are excepted, evenly matched with the surrounding empires) against Egypt and Philistia, and Sidon, and the nations of "the sea," and the Chaldeans, and the Assyrians. It was a people simple in manners, and not distinguished, either in art or science, against nations conspicuous in all that could give lustre and strength to empire. Both abstract and mechanical philosophy, and the arts of luxury, and great experience in commerce, and much wisdom in government; together with the glories of conquest, contributed to recommend and illustrate the gorgeous and seductive idolatries of the mighty countries by which the clans of Judah and Ephraim and Benjamin were hemmed in.

Truly it was no easy task assigned to the race of Abra-

ham, to maintain, uncorrupt, the worship of Jehovah, upon the narrow territory chartered to the patriarchs—The precipitous heights and rugged glens of Judea stood amid the deserts of the world like a high-fenced fortress, held from age to age by a band of men, loyal to their Sovereign; though beleagured by innumerable hosts of his foes. And the feeling too, that belonged to men so placed alone at the post of danger, must have been greatly enhanced and kept in agitation by the known existence of treachery within the walls. Never was there a moment when it might be said, that all Israel was true to the trust involved in its theocracy. The splendid and licentious worship of the neighbouring nations, with the dread influence of their superstitions over the natural fears of mankind, proved but too powerful a seduction to the Hebrew tribes, even in the best times; and there is reason to believe that, during long eras, the adherents of Jehovah were but a minority—scorned and oppressed, and in jeopardy of life. This state of things must be gathered as we peruse Jewish historians and prophets, from the age of Joshua, to that of Ezra.

Nevertheless, though all visible recommendations were possessed by those gods "of wood, and of stone, and of gold"—the Poet-king of Israel, after looking to the south, the north, the east, could confidently revert to the heights, of Zion, and say that the voice of joy and the acclamations of genuine and holy pleasure, were heard in that "Tabernacle of the righteous;" and nowhere else. Who that was not utterly depraved in heart, would have forsaken the modest and reverent solemnities of Jerusalem—not uncheered by song and music, for the wailings of the Sidonian worship—for the yells of the Tyrian—for the cruel service of the god whose ardent brazen arms receiv-

ed unpitied infants from the hands of ferocious or frenzied parents? or who would choose, instead of the service of Jehovah, the fanatic revelries—tumultuous and obscene, that so often ruffled the placid bosom of the Nile; or the monstrous pomps of the religion of Babylon, or of Ninevah, or of Damascus; where the glories of the sky (in which the eternal power and supremacy of the true God are manifested) were villified by alliance with the most hedious symbols; and where the despotism of the priest was —like a venom shed upon the edge of steel, employed only to aggravate the despotism of the sword?

Could any one dare affirm that it was Joy that dwelt in the temples of the demon-gods of Philistia, Phœnicia, Syria, Assyria, Egypt? or who would not have blushed to have said that perpetual Pleasures filled the courts of Chemosh, of Ashtaroth, of Dagon, of Baal, of Mithra? What did the grove conceal? Lust—Blood—Imposture. What sounds shook the Fane?—alternate screams of anguish, and the laughter of mad votaries. What was the Priest?—the teacher of every vice of which his god was patron and examplar. What were the worshippers?—the victims of every woe which Superstition and Sensuality, can gender, and which Cruelty can cherish.

It was not then a blind national prejudice, it was not spiritual arrogancy, that made the prophet, poet, and king of Israel exult in the distinction of his people. Rather it was a righteous scorn which made him exclaim, when he thought of the errors of the nations—"their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer; neither take their names into my lips." He turned toward the hill of God—the habitation of Jehovah, graced then perhaps with the solemn joys of its annual feasts. "Thither the tribes had gone up," from the glens of the vine and olive, from the valleys,

of corn—of milk, and honey—they had advanced "from rest to rest" and every one—every head of the thousands of Israel, was then "appearing before God in Zion." The harp and the viol were heard there; and the tabret and cymbal;—"stringed instruments and organs:"—the responsive anthem also, which taught as much as it cheered the people. And in sight of all, the smoke of the propitiatory sacrifice ascended direct to heaven—innocent sacrifice! The Priest made intercession for the people "within the veil;" but that veil concealed no shame—no cruelty—no fraud:—he came forth charged with a blessing, in the pregnant terms of which were condensed more of Sacred Science than all the rest of the world beside possessed. The congregation dispersed, and as they returned to their inheritances, the Joy of the Lord was their strength."

Well then might Askelon, and Gaza, Tyre, and Sidon, Nineveh, and Babylon, be challenged to do homage to the "city of God"—"to walk about Zion—to number her towers, to mark her bulwarks, to consider her palaces," and to confess, that "the Lord that made the heaven and the earth was in the midst of her." And such homage might indeed have been at length secured, had the Jewish people preserved their allegiance to Jehovah, and "kept his statutes," through a course of ages. "The mountain of the house of the Lord should have been established on the top of the mountains; and all nations should have flowed into it." God would have "blessed his people, and all the earth should have been his glory." A pure theology, a pure morality, an equable polity, a righteous administration of justice, needed only to be sustained entire for a lengthened period, and the eyes of mankind would have been fixed upon such a centre of wisdom and felicity. Sages would have resorted thither from all lands, and have

carried back, in greater or less purity, the elements of piety, virtue, and liberty. "Jerusalem should have been a praise in all the earth." We may believe this, as well on the ground of natural probability, as on the faith of Divine promises.

If it be true, even on earth, that the spot where God is known and worshipped is the residence of joy, and the home of pleasure, how emphatically true must it be when we come to speak of the upper world! Are there indeed regions where the Creator is unknown, or where his will is resisted?—amazing—terrible truth!—over such regions darkness and horror are spread. But are there worlds—or is there a continent of light, where His presence is visibly declared, and His favour always enjoyed, and His will constantly obeyed?—there abides "the fulness of joy." The distinct idea we insist on is this—That as Religion has its commencement in the knowledge of what are termed the Natural attributes of God, which in fact are subservient only to higher perfections; and as it receives its next considerable enhancement from a knowledge or spiritual perception of his attributes of Holiness and Goodness; so shall it reach its consummation in an immediate perception, or open vision of His unchanging and unsullied Blessedness. This absolute felicity of God is the ultimate point of theology;—and the eras of eternity shall be occupied in learning all that it comprises.

An important difference attaches to the mode in which these three stages of knowledge are attained. For the first is acquired chiefly by the deductions and inferences of reason. The second, by the testimony of Scripture, along with that inward communication, or "teaching of the Spirit," by which the heart is quickened. The third must wait for the immediate or *real* and *direct knowledge*

of its object, in the future world. It may be added that *the first* stage of this divine knowledge peculiarly belongs to the present life. *The second*, after having had its commencement on earth, reaches its highest degree (as we presume) in the region of separate spirits. *The third* is reserved for the state of perfection, when the ransomed of the Lord—ransomed from the grave, and from Hades, shall "be presented before the throne of his glory, with exceeding joy;" and shall thenceforward and for ever stand in his presence.

Our meditations may safely advance a step or two on this high path: at least we may pursue to some little distance the conception of what it must be to have immediate, sensible, and perpetual consciousness of the Blessedness of the Infinite Being. And we must first revert to the constitution of our own nature, in which nothing is more remarkable than the conflict that arises from the disposition to entertain ideas that far surpass our faculty of embracing or comprehending them. The finite and the infinite struggle together within us. This conflict, rightly interpreted, must be deemed a true indication of our destiny to endless life. And although by men much encumbered with the appetites and interests of the passing moment, little or nothing of the sort may be felt, it is otherwise in minds of superior and more ingenuous order; and the most vigorous and elevated spirits are those that feel, with the most intensity—what it is hard to express—the struggles of that desire which would embrace infinite perfections, and yet seems to fail the more it succeeds—to be baffled the more it actually advances.

Now it is not very difficult to distinguish the specific emotions that attend our contemplations, as we ascend the scale of the Divine attributes. For example; Indepen-

dent and Eternal existence—the Omnipresence—the Omniscience—the Omnipotence, and the absolute wisdom of God, which are proper objects of the intellectual faculty, are entertained not without a feeling in part painful—in part pleasurable :—or at least pleasurable just so far as associations have been formed between such ideas and the devout affections. But inasmuch as Reason is a *subservient power*, and must look to some *definite result* as the reward of its toil, the endeavour to become conversant with infinity must (by the nature of the case) always fall short of satisfaction ;—must want the sense of achievement. The impulse to advance is strong ; and so is the discouragement in proceeding ; and the balance of emotion is perhaps painful. We might conclude this to be the fact from the circumstance, that the devout mind, in any early stage of its effort to meditate upon the Natural attributes of Deity, turns aside to contemplate the Moral.

In this region, of merely intellectual notions we are at once encountered by the *imparity* of the object, and the faculty employed upon it. But in ascending to contemplate the rectitude, the purity, and the benevolence of the Divine Nature, *a real affinity* between the object and the faculty—that is to say the moral sense (spiritually informed) bears up the mind, and overcomes the uneasy sensations just before mentioned. In its emotions of love, complacency, and affectionate adoration, the soul ceases to dwell upon the idea of infinite and incomprehensible perfections ; and seems to be blending its own nature with the divine, rather than to be contrasting (as in the former case) the one with the other. And here it should distinctly be noted that, as it is the affections more than the reasoning faculty that are in activity, and as the affections are *ultimate powers* in the human mind, and do not look on

to any result beyond themselves, they are not liable, like reason, to a painful evulsion from the sense of not having reached the utmost limit possible. The soul reposes, and is *satisfied*, so far as it goes, on the path of love;—but never is so satisfied—can never so repose on the path of reason, until the goal be attained.

Pleasure, chastened by awe, attends this perception of the "beauties of Holiness." The mind agreeably alternates between its rational and moral notions;—reverting to the former that it may again, and with new force, admit the latter. The Eternal, the Omnipotent, the "Only Wise," is thought of for a moment in His incomprehensible perfections, in order that an augmentation may be gained to the sentiments wherewith His benignity and purity are contemplated.

These emotions, as we have already surmised, reach their acme in the separate state, which is specifically assigned to them, and while all other powers and desires are suspended. In that state (as we conjecture) the Divine Presence still remains veiled, and the Divine favour continues to be dispensed through the medium of the Mediator, whose office endures until the work of redemption is completed. May it then be thought that, when this intervention comes to an end, and admittance is allowed to the open Presence of the King eternal, that which is *ultimate* in the Divine Nature, namely—unchangeable and absolute felicity, shall become the prime object of the perceptions of all worshippers, and the one source or *reason* of all enjoyment? And then, both the natural and the moral perfections of God shall be, to His absolute Blessedness, what, at present, the natural are to the moral;—that is to say, they shall serve as the grounds of a higher *sense* of that Blessedness. In the manifested presence of the Sovereign Happiness it can no more be

conceived of as possible, that created and dependent spirits should make to themselves, or find room to admit, any happiness which does not emanate from that of the Supreme Being, than it is possible, in the very face of the summer's sun, to kindle a blaze which can repel or surpass that of noon. The very structure of the Mind implies that the greatest and most vivid cause of excitement should prevail over the lesser.

And though a natural prejudice (easily understood) may reject such an idea, those who will attentively follow up the rudiments of our religious knowledge, whether abstract or documentary, and will calmly compare such notions with the necessary conditions of a finite being, must discern a glimmering at least of the great truth—That the Supreme Being—self-existent, and altogether sufficient in Himself, possesses a felicity that is immensely remote from any *relation of mutuality* with that of his creatures—even the most exalted of them. And thence it will follow, not very indistinctly, that there will be presented to the observation of intelligent beings (more or less openly) certain movements or evolutions (language is utterly at fault) which have their issue only in that sovereign, independent Felicity, and in which movements the creature has no part, and can be no fellow. It is hard to conceive of the Infinite Excellence at all, otherwise than as comprising *interactive causes* which must have products possessing absolutely no affinity with any thing exterior to itself, and which can be but imperfectly surmised or discerned by any created intelligence. Nay, it ought to be assumed that the shoreless ocean of the Divine Felicity contains elements, and combinations of those elements, which utterly surpass all finite knowledge. And then the fact of such unsearchable depths being admitted, as a necessary

deduction of reason, there will be open to created minds the peculiar emotion naturally springing up when, with the boundless radiance of Infinite Blessedness full in view, it is recollected that a vast unknown remains beyond and within that visible glory!—"Who by searching can find out God:—who can find out the Almighty to perfection?"

In these principles there is comprehended a provision, never to be exhausted, for supplying new enjoyments to pure and intelligent beings. It is evident that to active natures, endowed with the power and desire of advancement, the eras of protracted duration must impart continually fresh accessions of capacity for discerning the perfections of the Infinite God. That which might not at all be known or conceived of in an early stage, may be comprehended in a stage more advanced; and thus the Boundless Felicity which none shall ever fathom, will be to all—and for ever, a spring of perpetual pleasures.

Themes of this order, which here have been but hastily and rudely touched upon, may properly employ the meditative faculty, without soon being exhausted. And it is much to be observed that, while the mind rests upon them, and rests upon them too until all emotions and faculties have duly fallen into the general movement, so as to contribute their aid—and especially while the Divine Spirit is cherishing the flame of pious hope, more may be attained or conceived of than language is fitted to convey. On *this* ground it is not true that a man may express whatever is really present to his mind; for the medium of communication was framed for no purpose so high; and it absolutely wants, as well the single terms, as the forms of connexion, necessary to effect it. It is a poor thing to advance, in our religious contemplations, only as far as to the boundary of that circle over which human language

spreads itself. And how poor a thing not even to extend the empire of the mind so far as to that boundary ; but to be continually repeating wonted phrases, of which the indolent spirit has never yet taken intelligent possession !

It is also to be noted that the just reprehension, or even contempt, which may be bestowed upon an idle endeavour to penetrate by IMAGINATION the invisible worlds, and to describe, in oriental style, the things which "eye hath not seen, nor the heart of man conceived," is not at all due to the proper effort of the mind when, by revolving the rudiments of its own nature, and by pursuing the indications of its highest affections, and by collating these with the evidence of Scripture, it labours to anticipate, in idea, its approaching destiny. If any are found blaming a labour of this sort, it will be—the inert, the frivolous, or the sensual.

Truly we are not thinking to depict the scenes and personages of the celestial world :—we are not assigning names, fortunes, qualities, adventures, to seraphim and cherubim ;—are not bringing together the bright colours, and perfect forms, and the odours, and gaiety, of the heavenly plains ; or speaking of groves, gardens, fountains, flowers, fruits, melodies, temples, palaces, triumphs. All this we leave. How unlike to any such pictures may probably be the actual scene, where the nations of heaven —immortal—ancient—wise—experienced—fraught with energy, courage, sacred ambition, loyalty to God, and goodwill to all creatures, are performing their parts, or hastening on their endless courses !

It is quite another thing, with modesty and with painful efforts, and in devout hope of heavenly guidance, to work problems by the aid of those materials of cogitation which reason and nature and Revelation afford.

XXVI.

THE PRECURSOR.

"Thou wilt Shew me the Path of Life."

Divinely guided, and yet very dimly, or perhaps not at all discerning the purport of his prophetic ode, the royal poet uttered, as in the person of "him who was to come," the confidence and hope of Messiah, in prospect of the arduous course he was to pass through. His God was to "shew him the path of life;"—that is to say, was to conduct him, as Leader of Salvation, over all the road, and through all the stages of human existence; even from the virgin's womb, to the right hand of Power in the heavens. Mortal life with its humiliations, and pains, and fears;—and death, with its anguish and dismay;—and Hades too. But Hades could not detain him who was to "lead its captivity captive; and ere "his flesh should see corruption," he was to burst the bars of the prison, and return to the light of day; and thence ascending, should enter upon the fulness of joy.

The Mediator is the Precursor of his people, on this "Path of Life," and an experienced Guide also, in its dangers. In all things "he has the *precedency;*" and advances in front of the host he is leading to the skies. By the right, both of conquest and experience, He exercises "domination over the dead and the living." There is no hazard of error in thus assigning its specific sense to the prophetic words of David; for the chief of the apostles, under the fresh influence of the Divine Spirit, applies and expounds them as fulfilled in none but Jesus—the Christ.

Leaving other implied principles unnoticed, we may, for a moment, meditate upon the relation of this *Precursive* part of the Mediator's work to the immortality and celestial felicity of his followers.

We have spoken of the "prepetual pleasures" that surround the throne of God. But what has *man* to do with themes so high, and so little in harmony with his actual condition? Look at him in the guise he wears! Does he seem like an aspirant to immortality and glory? Is such a one as *he* indeed on his way to the Royal abode of universal dominion?—Is not his eye anxiously fixed upon the low path he is treading? is not his brow knit with care, and soiled with degrading labour? is he not in heart ignoble? is he not emaciate? are not his garments worn —his feet lacerated—his provision corrupted? Yes, and has not his spirit bowed to the humiliations of his lot; so that he even consents to the scorn that belongs to it?—All this is true, and more might be said; nevertheless man must not surrender his pretension to the heavens. He has a special reason for his hope—a reason stronger than all contradictions.

That hope of immortality which the Christian entertains is neither a mere inference of reason; nor a bare verbal promise, sent from heaven to earth, that might be interpreted in various extents of meaning. But it is a deduction from an actual experiment, all the parts of which have been set out before us; and in examining them we attain the confidence and the familiarity which distinguish real knowledge from theory or imagination. If a future life simply had been announced, many analogies of the physical world, as well as our own consciousness of infirmity and degradation, might have led us to imagine that our next stage of existence was to raise

human nature a degree or two on the scale of power and of well-being; and was at length to be succeeded by another small accession to its faculties of enjoyment, or to its virtue; and so on through an extended period. The influence of any such supposition must have been to remove to a faint distance those bright objects, and that divine glory, which the Christian scheme brings into the nearest apposition to our hearts.

If we were to speak in this connexion of the *physiology* of human existence—of what might be called the natural history of the race, then we find it *exhibited*, or modelled, in the narrative of redemption. The Saviour of the world did not rescue man by making a visit, in royal state, to the scene of ruin; but by himself going through the several stages of their destined course; and while we contemplate his progress, we see, and have it ostensibly proved to us, that things far greater and higher than reason could at all have supposed, are actually brought within the range of hope; are "standing at the very door." There is but a "step between man and death." Nay; there is but a step between him and the very highest promotion. ONE who was "made like unto ourselves in all points," has in our view trodden the ground of earth, and has passed thence immediately and not through an immeasurable circuit, or by countless progressions—"into the heavens." From this our low abode, He, having loosed the bonds of death, and broken the bars of the grave, burst at once into the presence-chamber of the Majesty on high;—nor did he fear there to present himself in the form of humanity.

The assumption of the human by the Divine Nature, to say nothing now of its primary consequences, supersedes a multitude of questions and speculations that might have been entertained relative to the station which man

may natively be fitted to occupy. And it should not escape notice that human salvation is, with great uniformity of terms, spoken of by the inspired writers as *a restoration, a recovery;*—it is the bringing him back to the dignity he had lost. No expressions are employed which might seem to indicate that *an alteration*, or extension of the original plan of the human system had been admitted; or as if an arbitrary derangement of the ranks and orders of the intelligent system had been made, in consequence of which the family of Adam are to be promoted over the heads of others to a place higher than their qualities should fairly warrant.

Philosophical theories of human nature are in fault, on the side both of presumption and of frigid diffidence. Far too much is assumed in behalf of man in all that belongs to his actual condition, and his unassisted powers; and far too little in what relates to his original distination —to the importance of his present behaviour, and to his future lot. But the Scripture, in their history of man set out from a point more elevated;—follow him through a course that descends to the lowest depths; and again present him as emerging, and as setting out on an upward path that leads to an immeasurable height. And the special circumstance of this history is that the several stages of it are all displayed in the narrative of Redemption. Is it asked, on any side, "what do you mean—what do we pretend to, when we speak, at large, of glory, honour, immortality, or of a crown of life, or of being constituted kings and priests unto God;—or of setting on thrones to exercise powers of judgment, even over superior natures?" —we reply at once, that we pretend to whatever is involved in the union of the members with the Head—that Head being Divine;—and we expect whatever may fairly

be presumed when it is said, of all believers, that they shall be "like Him, and near Him (as his kinsman) who is the "Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his person."

The Representative of mankind, and their Deliverer, in anticipation of the part assigned him, appeals to the Father, and says—"Thou wilt shew me the path of life." And when afterwards he stood in the midst of that path; or nearly at the point of its lowest depression, he still keeps in view his character of LEADER of his people, and looking to heaven exclaims (is it prayer, or is it omnipotent volition?) "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me should be with me, to behold my glory;—and that where I am, they should be also." At the same time as if to assure the courage of his followers in the moment of fear, he says—"Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." And now that he is ascended on high, the invitation he sends forth to all who seek immortality is—"Follow me!" Jesus, Head of the Church, is "gone to appear in the presence of God for us;" not merely as Mediator, or High Priest; but as PRECURSOR:—and because he has actually attained that summit of glory and felicity, his people shall reach it also.

Thus we have *the reason* of our hope of future advancement set out in a living form, in the course or track of our Representative, from earth to heaven. And yet there remains an accommodation of the same expression, open to every believer. For after the primary intention of the prophetic words of David has been secured, we may assume them, not improperly, on behalf of the Christian, who, with solicitude or doubt, looks forward to the concealed path he has yet to tread, and addressing the "Shepherd and Bishop of souls," exclaims—"THOU wilt shew me the path of life!"

The capital purposes of the present scene of things demand that even the Christian should be left to approach the very verge of another state in ignorance of what it is that awaits him :—that is to say, of its circumstances, mode of existence, transactions, society. He is assured of the *fact* of continued consciousness ; and the spiritual rudiments of that after-state are also made known to him :—but nothing more. This ignorance, which to the irreligious is the occasion of desperate and stupid insensibility, in treading upon the brink of the invisible world, gives rise, in the heart of the Christian, to a trembling awe, and a dread expectation. His firm and matured belief of immortality quite forbids that he should, as others do, throw himself reckless from the shore of life. But the same faith, though it saves him from dismay, can never (or only in very rare instances) entirely exclude the trepidation so natural to the human mind on all signal occasions ; and most of all when nothing less than the dissolution of the fabric of life is, each successive moment, expected.

Now this blank ignorance of the world into which he is so suddenly, and so soon, to enter, is plainly intended to throw the Christian ingenuously, and without distraction, upon those very emotions which the unseen world is to call into exclusive activity. What can the dying believer do, uninformed as he is of the way he is to tread —his foot advanced, though the ground on which it is next to rest is unseen—what but recur to the rudiments of his hope ?—What but look to the PRECURSOR, who is also the Lord of that unseen world ? How different might be his sentiments if, in approaching the gate of death, or in first entering its shadows, a prospect were allowed to the mortal eye of the crowded and magnific scene which lies immediately beyond that gate ! The frailty of the

mind, shall we say that *infantile* misdirection of its curiosity, which belongs to its period of nonage, would lead it to prefer the less to the greater—the form to the substance. In a word, the principal and the essential emotion so signally proper to the great crisis of sense and faith, would give way to secondary feelings, which shall find other and more fit occasions for their exercise, and space enough in the long leisure of eternity.

Provision is made in the Scriptures for meeting the peculiar sentiment which the Christian's conjoined faith in the unseen world, and ignorance of its conditions, engenders. And, as matter of fact, the dying expressions of multitudes of the faithful, in every age, have exemplified the fitness of this provision to the occasion. If a solemn renewal of repentance is proper to the hour of death—if an explicit and fervent challenge of the Divine mercy is proper to it, these acts are not enough to impart confidence and joy, or even always a settled tranquillity. The palpitating heart must appropriate the *personal affection* of the Redeemer to his people. THIS APPROPRIATION is the secret of dying. The human mind, when once thoroughly occupied by a benign affection, specially fixed upon its object, can meet any danger, can brave any dismay. History abounds with illustrations of this fact; —it is a capital law of our nature. Men, nay women, thus animated, have forgotten all fear, and carried themselves through fields of death as calmly as if they had none but an ethereal frame. If we analyse our emotions on any occasions of this sort, we shall find that if at any time, a steady courage has borne us with force, and animation, and cheerfulness, through hours of imminent peril, it has been when we have had to act on behalf of those most dear to us; or when the welfare of such has depend-

ed altogether upon our conduct. Even the martial courage of the field (if it be more than animal bravery) is constituted on the same principle, and would be nothing if stripped of its affections.

Those who would blame as enthusiastic or presumptuous the fervours and speciality of devout affection, such as eminent Christians have expressed in their dying moments, know nothing of Christianity beyond the bare story they read in the Gospels; and nothing of human nature (or of human nature as affected by religion) beyond what belongs to the servile sentiments of a pelagian faith (better called distrust.) If multitudes of those who receive Christian burial, because they have received Christian baptism, die joyless, and disappear from the upper air as if sinking in a stagnant pool; it is not the fault of Christianity. Christianity meets us where we most of all need its aid; and meets us too with the very aid we need. It does not tell us of the splendours of the invisible world; but it does far better when, in three words, it informs us that (ἀναλῦσαι) to loosen from the shore of mortality, is (σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι) to be with Christ.

This is precisely the assurance which the occasion demands; for it not only quickens the devout affections but it fixes them on their object. Whoever has truly admitted the emotions peculiar to Christian faith, desires nothing more than is conveyed in this pregnant phrase. All security, and all joy, are comprised in the idea of beholding and of approaching the Son of God—the Son of Man—now exercising universal dominion;—and especially ruling the world of spirits. "If I go, I will come again to receive you to myself." This, and some parallel expressions, though they have a primary reference to a future signal event, may, on no very slender grounds,

be interpreted as conveying a promise to *individuals ;* as if the "Shepherd of the sheep" were wont *in person* to meet the new-coming spirit at its entrance upon the realm of peace. Be it so or not, it is clear that the faithful are authorized to entertain the well-defined hope—the hope of the heart, if the heart be indeed renewed, of coming, at death, into the sensible presence of the Saviour. What is the dread or reluctance of nature, if the Christian, in closing his eyes upon the world, can fix them on the Divine Deliverer, and say—"Thou wilt show me the path of Life ?"

XXVII.

ENDLESS LIFE.

"Neither can they Die any More."

CERTAIN objects of meditation, though intrinsically inferior to others, fully make up their original deficiency by the relation they stand in to our personal welfare. The fate of an empire must not be put in the scale with the life or fortune of an individual: nevertheless when that individual is watching public revolutions which must, in their results, decide his particular destiny, he may find it difficult to maintain in his feelings a due proportion between the less and the greater object. All other notions or objects of thought sink into insignificance, or quite disappear, by the side of those two paramount ideas—the Existence of God, and the proper Immortality of human nature. And although the latter can bear no comparison, abstractedly, with the first, its ineffable importance to ourselves places the two on a sort of equality in our minds.

If the first of these truths challenges to itself all perfections, and infinity, as the crown of all; the second, how limited soever may be the elements to which it relates, claims also infinity; and thus gains an importance that is not to be measured. And in fact it is this second truth the immortality of man, which imparts its fearful moment to the first. If the present life were the whole of our destined period, we might assign the principles of theology to a place among curious questions. But when

it is told us that the consciousness we inherit is strictly indestructible—that no mutations in the mode of existence —no accidents—no alterations in the laws of nature;—not even the upturning of the material universe—not the extinction of all things visible, can bring about the annihilation of man, then indeed it becomes a question of unutterable consequence—"What is God?"—for we—even we, are to be the companions of his eternal duration!

The creatures of a day—of a summer—of a century, might be imagined, when they stand upon the threshold of their term of existence, to make inquiry concerning the attributes and dispositions of the Creator, and the rules of his government: for these are to give law to their season of life, and to be the measure of their enjoyments. But with what intenseness of anxiety might the Sons of Immortality put such questions, as they come severally to set foot upon a course that shall have no end, and that must always be gathering to itself importance! If mankind were awake to futurity, and discerned the present stage of life to be an infancy for eternity—a tentative only in existence—all would rush, as it were, upon the great field of divine Science, that by every means they might truly know Him, who is Sovereign Disposer of their destiny. Apart from the doctrine of immortality, the doctrine of the Divine attributes might be tranquilly dealt with, as we deal with any abstruse matters, or with mathematical principles:—they are of some moment; but it is bounded by the brief period of our own connexion with the material world. How much otherwise is it when every attribute—natural and moral, of the Infinite Being shall forever concentrate its rays, as in a focus, upon the immortal created spirit;—so that this spirit shall draw to itself, in some manner, and without end, *a special conse-*

quence from the omnipotence, and the omniscience—from the rectitude, and the benignity of God!

These great truths are too closely allied not to share the same fate in the world. If the one be obscured or deformed, the other is forgotten or villified. Whoever knows not God, knows not himself;—and the reverse. Or if theology be frigidly treated as a sterile, difficult, or vapid matter—the future life is also a listless theme; we shall see the incredible inconsistency of a confession that man is actually set out upon an endless pilgrimage; along with an easy contempt of all solicitude concerning the direction it is to take! But when once the soul awakes, as from a dream, to the rational consciousness of either truth, with what force and majesty does the other present itself to the mind! The belief of immortality brings God before the soul, as if visibly manifested:—the knowledge of God kindles the conception of endless life.

Or if we would still more distinctly discern the connexion of these prime principles, let us for a moment attempt to sever them. In the first place (if indeed we dare entertain such a conception) we may think of finding ourselves members of an innumerable community of beings of like powers and dispositions;—not more good, or more wise, and yet all immortal;—but atheistic;—God having withdrawn himself far, and for ever, from the circle of creation; or that there were no Intelligent Supreme—no Omnipotence, no Ruler, no law, no order!—but that passions and private interests—pride, fear, desire, took their courses, in single lines, rushing one upon the other in confusion, perpetually more confused. Who must not court annihilation, rather than launch upon any such shoreless ocean of immortality—without God?

Or let the converse be thought of, and it be supposed

that a rational spirit, after becoming in the highest degree conscious of its own powers of enjoyment and of progression, and after gaining a sight of the glory of the Most High, and of the felicities of eternal life; after tasting the fruits of heaven, and drinking of the cup of immortality, should find itself fast floating on to the brink of extinction; and while the e ye might yet gaze upon the bright and unbounded field of endless bliss—bliss it could so well relish—yes, with the attributes of God—the source of good, all before it, should look down and see the abyss of death—death absolute, whereinto a wave or two more must hurl it! Better not know at all the Divine Perfections, than see and know them, just as we are about to fall from our place in creation! So true is it that, if immortal, we must seek for God; and if God be at hand, we must covet immortality. It is even just conceivable that the most gross, sensual, or malignant minds, which now—while the present life bounds their prospect—"desire not the knowledge of the Almighty," and say to Him, "depart from us," may, on their entrance upon that state whence they shall look on through an interminable life, ask for Him as Ruler and Arbitrator, although conscious of their rebellion against his government. As if it were less tolerable to exist forever where God is not, than to exist where he is an adversary.

It has been affirmed, and perhaps with reason, that the mere power which the human mind possesses of conceiving abstractedly of a First Cause—Intelligent and Benignant, is proper proof, and real demonstration, of the fact. An argument of this sort comes not within the design of these pages. But it may be said that, if such an argument be valid, it implies the goodness of another, frequently urged—That the expectation of a future life, and

the strong and universal impression of mankind on this subject, is equal to a natural proof of what is so universally looked for. If man be thought of only physiologically, it seems a violent or monstrous supposition, that he should be endued with an instinct that is absolutely nugatory, or destitute of object, intention, utility. This common belief of a future life—if indeed there be no such state, is much the same as if the shoulders of the human race sprouted with wings, though men had no power of raising themselves into the air.

But whatever may be the force of such arguments, our faith in immortality actually takes its stand on divine testimony, rather than on abstruse reasons. In truth we have need of this testimony to put an end to some doubts which reason could never solve. There are lines of argument which, although they might seem fairly to establish the doctrine of *a life* after the dissolution of the body, would not absolutely include the notion—amazing idea!—of ENDLESS EXISTENCE. It is one thing to awake at death to a new life; and another to inherit absolutely a never-ending life. The many physical analogies which indicate the law of a renewal of functions, in other forms, after long periods of torpor or decay, would not necessarily imply more than that man, the noblest of animals, should reappear also on the stage of action, and pass through a century or more of transformations. The same may be said of the common expectation of mankind, and of the argument usually drawn (and very conclusively) from the notion of good government, which requires another state, wherein may be vindicated the great axioms of justice and virtue—so much obscured as they are by the events of the present state. Less than eternity might suffice for restoring order to the moral system, according

to *human* ideas of what justice demands. All these notions or conclusions, though they put contempt upon the gross error of the atheist, will scarcely be deemed *demonstrative*, though corroborative, of the capital truth before us—the assignment of endless duration to created minds.

It will indeed be alledged, and perhaps justly, that the same reasons which *now* demand an after life, will go forward with undiminished force to another, and again to another epoch of existence; so as in fact to establish the claim of man to absolute immortality. It may be so; and yet the vastness of such a belief, if we conceive of what the terms convey, must throw us back upon the clearest and most irrefragable proof. What is it we are speaking of?—Infinity! and infinity attached to a finite being! Does it not seem as if for a creature to challenge to itself, in any sense, a boundless attribute, were to trench upon the prerogative of the Divine Nature? Or if Revelation had not set this matter on another footing (as we shall see) might it not seem a surrender of the first principles of theology to admit, that beings, derived, dependent, limited, might participate with the uncreated and unlimited nature in the attribute of indestructible existence? Can it be true that men, or any other creatures, shall go on in company with the Self-existent Being, through such tracts of duration as shall almost bring oblivion upon the point of commencement, and generate a consciousness as if He and they were alike eternal? We talk lightly of immortality: but it is because the greatness of the idea prevents our considering what it is we affirm. More thoughtfulness would impel us to look more narrowly to the grounds of our belief.

But has it not been demonstrated that MIND, because it

is a simple and indestructible substance, *must* live for ever? Whoever accepts this demonstration is free to do so; and even those who decline to receive it as absolutely conclusive, will gladly listen to an argument on this ground *after* they have by another process, convinced themselves that indeed *the human mind* is destined to perpetuity. Meanwhile both parties will gratefully turn to the inspired writings, to derive thence the best sort of evidence the doctrine can admit. And this evidence will be found to possess a force, by implication of principles, which far surpasses any imaginable value that ought to be attached to the etymological import of single words.

No etymon comprises what we are speaking of, or has power to convey so much more than language was formed to express, or than the notions of mankind at large have ever comprehended. This truth, as it is beyond conception, is far beyond words, and must be drawn from the great and unquestionable principles of religion. Those who would succinctly say, that such, or such syllables contain the affirmation of infinite existence, have probably never fixed their minds, with any intentness, upon that of which they speak;—have never asked themselves—how much less than to be divine, is it to be—immortal? Let such persons toil awhile upon the conception, which so easily they talk. To facilitate this toil let them exchange the idea of duration for that of extension; or rather attempt to attach the former, of which we know little, to the latter, of which we know much more. Let it be imagined then, that the task assigned to man were to set out, at his ordinary rate of movement, on a circuit of that space which is filled by the visible creation. Are we somewhere in the centre of that space?—Then must the traveller first make his way, step after step, from this cen-

tral starting-point to the utmost bounds of the inhabited heavens; he must go on till he has left behind him the brighter of the stars; and those too that are immensely more remote than the brighter. But let us cut short the preliminary journey, and fancy him standing (with his task still unattempted) at the extreme orbit of the material system. He has to measure its circumference:—the human foot has to tread the zodiac of the universe! Has it at length accomplished the round of all worlds—has the course of the traveller girt the skies?—then send him forth anew to do the same:—and when he has repeated his task as often as there have been single steps in his way, he will still be young in immortality. To live for ever, is a far more stupendous matter than to make the circuit of creation a myriad of times.

It is fearful, if we reflect upon what it implies, to bear relation, in any way, even remotely, to infinitude:—for who shall calculate the whole result of such a connexion? How fearful then to carry infinity in our very bosoms!—to be wedded inseparably to that which has no bounds!—We may calmly survey all other properties of human nature, and may admire the skill with which its several functions are combined. But shall we dare steadily to fix the eye upon that yet undeveloped property which lurks beneath the fine machinery of life?—Shall we gaze upon this faculty of endless existence—faculty that is now but just waking itself from the torpor of its birth, and will go on expanding its vigour, and springing up yet young and hale, after it has out lived the stars? In comparison with this power of eternal life, all powers are nothing: or should we not rather say, that every faculty which is linked to this, borrows from it an incalculable importance?

The unfixed practice of our English translators in

rendering the Scripture terms of duration, has thrown a disadvantage upon certain very momentous questions, and has made many affirmations of the inspired writers *seem* vague, which probably were to themselves, and their first readers, quite definite; or at least more so than they are to our ears. The confusion hence arising has led certain controvertists to found an argument upon the supposed force of a single term (αἰώνιος) to which Scripture usage has given a very great latitude of meaning; and which therefore must, in every place, receive its specific value from the subject in hand. Most fully may it be granted that in the apostolic axiom—as well as in many other places—"The gift of God is eternal life," there is included —infinite, or never-ending existence. But our persuasion of this fact must not be made to hinge on the native or independent force of the adjective there employed; but upon the evident intention of the writer, as illustrated and confirmed by other means.

If the direct calculations by which the distances of the heavenly bodies is fixed, were called in question, recourse would be had to some more circuitous process of proof—the parallax—the times of revolution—the ascertained irregularity, and disturbance of forces; and when every line of proof was found to accord with the fact, as at first affirmed, the primary calculation would be deemed incontestible. It is thus that the obvious or apparent sense of the phrase—eternal life," is attested and settled by several concurrent arguments. A brief allusion to these is all that can comport with our present purpose.

In the first place then, generally, the Scriptures assign to man an original dignity, much greater than mere philosophy supposes, or than is implied in the grovelling sentiments which the sensuality and the degradation of the

human mind itself engender. The inspired writers, while they deal faithfully with man in regard to his actual corruption, magnify, without scruple, his character as related to God, and to futurity. The *style* of the Bible, in this point, prepares us to receive whatever it may affirm concerning his destiny. And leave is given at once to entertain the greatest conceptions, when, in the first page of the sacred Canon, it is said—and said with emphasis, that "God created man in His own image;—in the image of God created he man." This first principle of religion forbids or forestalls, in brief, every objection against what may follow. And that this dignity, whatever it might include, was not forfeited by the transgression of Adam, is made certain when the same principle is anew affirmed, as an abstract or universal truth—"Man is the image of God;" or less universally, that, by the Gospel, all that believe are "made partakers of the Divine Nature."

But it is the mystery of Redemption that carries our point, and gives even a facility to our conception of a truth so astounding, as that man is to live for ever, by placing it in a subordinate position to the still more amazing truth of the union of the Divine and human natures, in the person of the Mediator. The latter includes the former, as the greater includes the less, and implies it also; so that even if the promise of eternal life had not been conveyed in terms free from ambiguity, they must have received this absolute sense from the superior principle to which they are related. We stand here on ground far more substantial than that of etymology, or verbal criticism. We are conversant with substances, not symbols. Our Lord, in his private conversations with his disciples, avails himself of the stores of tropical expression for the purpose of fixing in their minds the belief of an intimate

and indissoluble union between themselves and him. And the copiousness and variety these esoteric discourses are manifestly intended to meet and obviate doubts, from whatever quarter arising. There is a progression from the figurative to the abstract style—a progression natural when the speaker is solicitous to provide against all objections. Christ is "the Shepherd, who so loves his flock as to lay down his life for their sakes." He is "the vine," and the source of life to the branches. But this is not enough; and in the most solemn forms of which human language is susceptible, and in a direct address to the Father, he carries to the highest point, the idea of the close and inseparable junction of the Divine and human natures, of which junction himself is the medium:—"That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us." If any thing of explicitness or of certainty be here wanting, it is only because the powers of language must somewhere find a limit.

The Author of immortality—resplendent in his title as "Prince of life"—"the Living One"—He who "has life in himself"—who is abstractedly—"the Life, and the Light of men," and is "alive for evermore;"—and "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever:"—the Possessor of all duration—"whose goings forth have been from everlasting; whose name is, Father of eternity;"—He who thus draws to himself all honours, as Fountain of existence, sums up every other assurance, when he tells his followers that, "BECAUSE HE LIVES, THEY SHALL LIVE ALSO;" as if formally to pledge his own immortality for theirs;—or as if they might fear extinction, when He—the Lord of life, should be no more.

It ought to be noticed that the apostles, in that incidental manner which belongs to them, take up and employ,

on this subject, the several terms of perpetual duration which their habit of using the Greek language in a Jewish sense naturally presented them.*—"So shall we be for ever (πάντοτε, *not* εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) with the Lord." The faithful shall be made pillars in the temple of God, and shall "go no more out" (ἔξω οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ ἔτι) a mode of expression as conclusive and emphatic as language well admits of.

But if yet there were room for a form of affirmation which might seem to comprise all others—to grasp the very idea of endless existence, and to exclude ambiguity, we find it in our Lord's declaration concerning those who should be "deemed worthy to obtain part in the future life (Οὔτε γὰρ ἀποθανεῖν ἔτι δύνανται) "They CANNOT DIE ANY MORE; being on a par with the angels." The terms carry the idea of an abstract, or of a physical impossibility of undergoing dissolution or extinction:—such are to be made heirs of *indestructible existence.*

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* The full illustration of this point is unsuited to our purpose; but is in itself, well worthy of particular attention. All distinctness on this subject is merged in our English version.

XXVIII.

THE PERPETUITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

"This mortal—must put on immortality."

And now are we to rest here? Should we come to the conclusion that the heirship of endless life, though it be clung to firmly, is a matter too vast and inconceivable to employ our deliberate meditations; and must be left as a vague expectation, until it be entered upon? There is a semblance of modesty, or devout humility in such a conclusion:—but indolence, or earthliness, or frivolity, may have a part in it: and we may as properly be jealous of these, as careful not to trench upon those.

We must recur to a principle already mentioned, namely—That the Christian doctrine of the resurrection *of the body*, places subjects of this class in a position very different from that which they might otherwise have occupied. If a simple announcement had been made to us of —a future, and an endless life, we might well have thought that it would bear so little analogy to the present condition of man as scarcely to come within the range of our conjectures. How probable is it, we might then have said, that the most elaborate conceptions will prove to have been utterly erroneous, as well in principle, as in circumstance; and that the labour of the mind in anticipating futurity, will be idle—even as a dream.

But the Christian hope of immortality is not altogether of this vague or unsubstantial kind: on the contrary, though

much brevity belongs to the announcement, it is not indeterminate. It is HUMAN NATURE, in its essential elements, that is to inherit eternity ;—not an ethereal rudiment, just saved from the wreck of the former fabric, and just serving to connect, as by a film of identity, the earthly with the heavenly state. It is—THIS MORTAL that must put on Immortality ;" the very nature now subject to dissolution, is to escape from the power of death, and to clothe itself in imperishable vigour. Do we want at once confirmation and exemplification of this doctrine ?—We have both in the resurrection of the Lord.

Whatever belongs especially to the economy of the present life is of course understood to drop with the dissolution of the body ;—but all other elements are to be perpetuated. And the modes of action, and the sentiments, and the affections, which now are human, and rational, will then be so, even when man shall have set out anew upon the road of life. It is therefore by no means preposterous, or presumptuous, or idle, to look inward upon the actual principles or machinery of our nature, and to ask—How shall *these same powers work*, one upon another, when they shall take their play at large upon the fields of boundless existence ? We may lawfully thus ruminate upon ourselves—enkindle the embers of hope within our bosoms, and look, with a steady intelligence, to that afterstate, which is nothing but the consummation of the present. The proper office of religious meditation is to sever the precious from the vile—to throw off from the immortal spirit, the adjuncts and degradations that oppress it ; and to borrow something from the inexhaustible riches of eternity, for ennobling the poverty of time.

The human mind is liable to two kinds of sudden revolution ; each giving a new character to its emotions,

and a new direction to its faculties. The *first* is when every habit and taste, nay, almost the identity of the character, is broken up by some disastrous stroke, which levels to the dust every possession, and every honour, and every cherished hope; and sends a man forth, as if upon a strange scene of things, with faculties (mature indeed) but not adapted to the usages of that sphere which must now give them exercise. The recollection of his former life is a dream, that only the more alienates him from the realities of the present. The *second* kind or revolution is of a happier kind, and takes place when a man, by an unlooked for turn of fortune, is in an hour raised from obscurity and penury, or from inaction and discredit (which he had believed to be his unalterable lot) to high employments, and dignity, and affluence—to a station where at once he finds scope for those powers of mind of which heretofore he had almost feared to think himself the possessor, and which his modesty had taught him to repress more than to cherish. In such an hour of elevation, a sound understanding, healthfully excited rather than made giddy, and much less moved by the adjuncts of high fortune, than by the substantial matters that claim attention, bends all its thoughts to the principles of conduct, and to the temper, which now are called for. Such a one loses little time in idle amazement at his own promotion; but with diligence adjusts his latent and unpractised powers to the functions of his place; and even if a day be given to exultation, to-morrow finds him—the man of his order—serene, energetic, and familiarly occupied with the great cares that have fallen into his hand.

This kind of sudden change is in fact only a natural expansion of existing powers:—it is so that the blossom unfurls its ripened gaiety to the sun;—so that life,

ordinarily breaks from its confinements; and so, as we may well believe, that the sons of immortality shall awake to their lot in the future world. Doubt and sadness, and the pusillanimity that infests depression, shall be forgotten :—the *husk* has withered, and is fallen; and all is vigour, and freshness, and growth. The child of heaven breathes at length his proper element—looks, without amazement, over the endless road that lies outstretched at his feet, wonders not to feel himself immortal, and thinks nothing strange—but that he should ever have doubted of eternity as his inheritance.

Shall the first clear prospect of this inheritance—a possesion never to be spent, and never forfeited, generate a feeling like that with which vast wealth is grasped?—In like manner as the love of sensual pleasure and ease is only (as we have said) a perversion of the original instinct of our nature, so is cupidity, and the lust of property (one of the firmest and most permanent of passions) a perversion also of the native impulse of the mind to embrace and retain something which it may call, without dispute its own. The vicious sentiment that has attached itself to this strong native impulse, must not prevent our acknowledging that it takes its rise from the very roots of the human mind; and if so, shall, in some manner, find at length a just sphere of exercise. Perhaps we might assume it as true, that the *independence* with which intelligent natures are endowed, and which distinguishes such from all inferior orders, and which is the ground too, or necessary condition of the moral system, demands, or involves, an emotion of this sort. The pleasurable SENSE OF POSSESSION is (as we presume) a proper constituent of an intelligent and accountable being. We scarcely find a trace of any such passion among the

lower tribes. Man is the only proprietor on earth; and the only miser. It is by blind instinct that the bee and the ant fill their garners.

Man's ignorance of what himself is capable of enjoying, throws him upon the capital error of looking to things exterior and alienable, as his wealth; and in making this ill choice, he heaps to himself a world of care;—for a thousand accidents may come and intervene between his passion and its object. Thus it is that, while other irregular desires bring their retributive sorrow after the hour of gratification is gone by, Avarice stands, scourge in hand, over her victim, and inflicts a cruel pang at every instant. No such error or disorder shall have place in the world of perfection. The strong instinct of the soul shall be turned inward: and how shall we conceive of the force it shall suddenly acquire when its object is nothing less than a title to endless life! We say—*suddenly* acquire;—and yet it may be conceived that the impression which, during its terrestrial course, has fixed itself deeply in the mind, of the brevity and near termination of all enjoyments, will be carried forward awhile, even into eternity; nor at once be obliterated. Perhaps some experience of the solid and permanent quality of happiness in the future world must be had, before the mind shall be fully awake to the sense of its boundless property in joy. It may have advanced some way on the road of endless life, and may have looked on with exultation to a remote eminence of the great horizon—bright in the beams of perpetual day toward which it is advancing, before the thought distinctly arises—that that far distant height even when attained, shall but afford a new prospect of a still wider expanse of the plains of eternity. This it is to be wealthy:—this is POSSESSION

—to have *in the bosom* the principle or law of immortality, and while conscious of it, to look abroad upon a world of pleasure, whereon there is nothing exclusive.

This is wealth! and yet it is held on conditions.—What were eternity without the providence and promise of God? Let it be supposed that beings like ourselves were to enter upon unbounded duration, under the fairest circumstances, and in possesion of all powers and means of enjoyment: nevertheless it must be felt that the revolution of all possible events which *eternity* includes, must (if uncontrolled) bring into jeopardy, in turns, every source of happiness, and every principle of virtue. If happiness and virtue might even be secured through *one* period of duration, or through many, the *infinite series* will, somewhere, place in opposition principles that shall clash, and shatter one the other. The powers of Eternity are then so many powers of terror to the inheritors of immortality, unless they are known to be all provided for by the SUPREME POWER. If we do but attentively consider what is meant by endless duration, we shall vividly feel that the prospect of it, as actually outstretched before us, must drive the soul in amazement and dread to throw itself upon the Divine care. What is the foresight of a created mind—what are its resolutions—what its faculties—what its personal sufficiency, when brought into play with the hazards of eternity? Shall not the dependent spirit eagerly seek a refuge, and a strength, and an explicit promise too, before it can dare even to look down upon that terrible infinity (though it seemed crowded with delights) which spreads itself out on all sides? Must not the finite, the insufficient being, cling to the arm of Omnipotence, when first it sets foot upon the road of eternal life? Will it not hold back as it gazes upon the vast

unknown, and ask to hear those words of consolation—"I will never leave thee, no, never forsake thee!"

Does not this idea bring into view one of those principles, that, as a means, or motive, secures the allegiance of happy and immortal beings? With our present feelings, when we look up, and conceive of the loyal hierarchy that surrounds the mount of God, we almost tremble lest some unlooked-for caprice of the voluntary power, should surprise any, and in a moment hurl them from their places. But beside other principles of conservation—do not all orders, from their high standing, look forward through the unnumbered eras of duration, which each for himself has yet to pass through?—and who knows what strange occasions those ears may produce—who can divine what trials may yet sleep in the womb of eternity? —Certain devout expressions of confidence in God, which we ordinarily presume to be applicable *only* to this present state of pains and fears, may perhaps be heard (who shall say they are not?) to ring around the throne in the heavens, among those who (better taught than we are in the great lesson of the frailty and dependence of finite beings) tremble in the consciousness of their own endless existence, and prostrating themselves before God, exclaim—"Thou art our Refuge and Strength:—our Rock and High Tower:—in Thee will we be confident. What time we are afraid we will trust in Thee. Yea, in the name of our God will we set up our banners. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and we, while pressing around the foot of it, are secure in bliss!"

A blank promise of security is not that which the Scriptures afford to those who receive the Gospel; for the "promise left us," sanctioned by the "oath of Him who cannot lie," is made the vehicle of conveying to the hu-

man race all the knowledge it can at present receive of the ineffable constitution of the Divine Nature. The one God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is not made known to us in the method of an independent revelation of that high mystery; but only in its relation to the redemption and ultimate security of man. This observable fact (which gave occasion to the error of the Modalists and Sebellians) involves a pregnant inference for the future world; and naturally leads to the supposition (or let it be called conjecture) that the same mystery is hereafter to evolve itself, to the apprehension of the redeemed, on the same principle of its bearing upon their *preservation*. As if the personal solicitude of the heirs of eternal life—or rather their sense of dependence and frailty, was to be the special motive that should impel them intently to gaze upon the Supreme Nature, and to watch its gradual developements, that they may discern, more and more clearly, the reasons, immutable, of their own safety.

The Supreme Nature, which includes all perfections and elements of bliss, need not be conceived of as certainly affording to *any* beings a full manifestation of its own constitution. Nor perhaps would do so at all, if it were not that this constitution has, in a special manner, been involved in the destinies of some members of the intelligent creation. May it distinctly be conjectured, or vaguely surmised, that the occurrence of evil, and the DIVINE ACTS consequent upon it, have served to bring forth from the Eternal Bosom the long-hidden mystery of the Divine Existence? Shall it be lawful to think that, in suddenly coming forth to the rescue of a fallen race, God became manifest to the eyes of all intelligent orders, as heretofore He had not been; and that they then beheld the Infinite Nature, in its essential distinction?

With more certainty it may be affirmed that the economy of human salvation has, *to the human family*, so signalized the distinction of the Triune Nature, that it will not again be lost sight of; but rather will be more and more evolved in the view of the redeemed race. This at least may readily be supposed, that human minds shall find all their sense of safety, and all the calmness of their joy, to spring from their knowledge of the Great Mystery, of which on earth they had received the rudiments, and which heaven shall much more develope.

The greatest object must command the attention of all who have it in prospect. And where the Supreme Being is sensibly present, He must fix upon himself every eye. But shall it be so for ever? Shall active and intelligent natures, always advancing (and perhaps rapidly) in knowledge and in power of comprehension, at length attain to such a maturity and completeness of conception, as to leave nothing unfathomed, even in the Infinite Nature? It seems at first sight almost difficult to believe the contrary;—for the faculties of knowledge are open to what may be termed a law of geometrical progression; every argument is pregnant and multiplies itself by combination with others. Our first thoughts might lead us thus to suppose that the accumulations, both of knowledge and of the power of comprehension, might at length (or must) reach a climax and a pause. But more deliberate consideration brings us to a different conclusion, which, if it must be summarily expressed in abstruse terms, nevertheless may be expanded by whoever will fix his mind upon the subject. Although the Divine Nature be not in any sense mutable or *progressive*, its perfections do, as we see come into relation with that which is both mutable and progressive. In other words, there is going on now (and

we should believe always will be going on) an interaction between the power, wisdom, and moral attributes of God, on the one hand, and the finite and created system on the other. It is by the fruits or products of this interaction that the Divine Nature becomes cognizable; and it might be affirmed, almost as a demonstrable verity, that The Infinite Perfections shall never have exhausted those combinations of which the finite and created system is susceptible. If the works and dispensations of God are the book in which intelligent beings are to read the character of the author, we may certainly aver, that the Commentary shall never reach a close. And not merely is it true that there shall be no end to the series of facts and events —of products, persons, revolutions; and these always various, so that there shall be an incessant stream of novelties; but (which is of far more consequence) all such new products—actors and destinies, shall be *fresh manifestations* of the principles whence they proceed—further interpretations of the Divine Nature.

The intelligent and immortal nations, continually accumulating their knowledge, and by means of these accessions gaining more and more power of grasping the principles of celestial wisdom, shall find, that the effect of such advancement is only to give them a still more enlarged conception of the immeasurable distance between the creature and the Creator. It is so that the traveller who ascends slowly the steep sides of the Andes, when, stage after stage, he looks beneath and around him, and gazes at each advance upon a wider horizon than before, convinces himself that he is actually attaining a great elevation above the common level of earth, whence he started. And yet, when he looks upward to the starry vault, and sees it now in all its amplitude, and through a

more translucent medium, so as that more distinctly than before he is conscious of the vastness and distance of the heavenly system, his *impression* is not that he is getting nearer to the stars; but rather that, though actually he rises, they are drawing back to a greater remoteness, and are contemning his feeble efforts to climb on high.

But how shall we at all conceive of that strange commixture of sentiments, apparently incompatible, the one with the other, which shall result, after the lapse of extended periods, from this vastly-augmented sense of the Infinitude of God, on the one hand; and from that sense, on the other, of the lessening of the distance between the created and the uncreated spirit, which (as before we have observed) belongs to the full play of the devout affections? This inconceivable conflict or counterpoise, well deserves to be thought of. And we *may* think of it though imperfectly; because it just makes itself felt in the present state. Does there not sometimes arise a sort of pleasurable agony in the heart, when intimate, and affectionate, and even tender emotions of gratitude, and love, and complacency (such as the Scriptures authenticate) are vividly combined with ideas of the power, majesty, and incomprehensible attributes of Him with whom thus we are conversing? How do these emotions enhance one the other, until the frailty of the mind compels it to fall back to earth. And shall it be, that both this affectionate approximation, and this augmented sense of the remoteness of the Supreme Being, are to go on together through the eras of eternity, —each more and more intense continually, and each working upon its antagonist with greater force! The thought of a counterpoise like this, does it not well exclude from our anticipation of endless life, all idea of stagnation or decay?

XXIX.

UNISON OF THE HEAVENLY HIERARCHY.

"*Christ—the Head of all Principality and Power.*"

Let such a state of things be distinctly conceived of as would be produced among mankind if—shall we say, a thousand of the heroes and sages of antiquity—men born for domination, or born to instruct their fellows—Cyrus, Numa, Pythagoras, Themistocles, Coriolanus, Solon;—Epaminondas, Hannibal, Scipio, Sylla;—Alexander, Cæsar, Trajan, with others subordinate, and fitted to be the ministers of their power—had enjoyed immortality on earth from their own age to ours, and during the lapse of the intervening centuries had been in the midst of affairs, and conversant with all revolutions;—in one era at the summit of prosperity; in another struggling with reverses; but always accumulating theoretic and practical wisdom:—that they had long ago thrown off, as a man discards the follies of boyhood, the prejudices or unsound principles of their early course;—had learned to concentrate all motives and passions upon the one great purpose of securing to themselves the submission of mankind;—had been, during all that time, so perfecting their knowledge of the laws of human affairs, as to enable them almost infallibly to predict the course of events, and to adapt their conduct to furturity, as if guided by an oracle in every practical decision.

In what manner would our statesmen and captains—the men of thirty, fifty, or seventy years, beseem them-

selves in the society, and under the orders of the men of twenty centuries?—How would those who have had experience of, perhaps, as many affairs as they could give the history of in a day, sit in council with the Fathers of empire, each of whose personal adventures would be more voluminous than the entire bulk of our extant universal history? If there be indeed any general principles to which the affairs of men and nations are conformed, and if also these general principles are much entangled with indirect or latent causes, then must an incalculable advantage rest on the side of those whose actual knowledge and experience was, to that of other men, as fifty or a hundred to one. It is hard to imagine any sort of communion, or of combined agency, or any mutual good-will and respect, among parties so immensely unequal. With the *seniors*, the courtesies of conversation must have been insincere—mere affectations of sociality, a voluntary humility, more mortifying to the juniors than open arrogance and contempt. With the *juniors*, silence and servility would have been the only mode of good sense:—manly independence must have seemed the most egregious folly. Wisdom would rather be crushed in the germ, than cherished in such society.

And yet what is it that we have to look to in the world of immortality? Are there no ancients in that world—no superiorities? are we not infallibly told that it contains Thrones Principalities, Powers? Are there not probably (nay can we believe otherwise) are there not, in that world, a thousand servants of the Most High, who have occupied posts of trust and honour at the right hand of universal dominion, while sun and planets have been running through their destined periods, and have vanished? On this matter of fact the brief but intelligible notices

of Revelation accord entirely with the suppositions of sound reason. The Sadducean belief that man is the only intelligent order in the creation—or the most ancient order, is an opinion very much on a level (as to its abstract probability) with that of those sages who deem the stars and planets, the sun and the moon, to be nothing more than spangles, or fiery points in our mundane firmament.

Reason would indeed easily assent to the supposition that tribes and orders immensely unequal in power and knowledge, should keep to their several abodes, and observe impassable intervals between rank and rank. This would evade the difficulty. But the implied meaning of certain scriptural phrases leads us to a different belief—namely, that man is to take no subaltern position in the great world; and on the contrary, is to come, on terms of honour, into the highest communities. And the principle which shall harmonize this system, is at once seen, if it be assumed that when the Eternal World was made flesh—when He who was "before all things, and in whom all things consist," humbled himself to the level of mortality, and, "passing by the nature of angels," took upon him a nature "somewhat lower," there was a purpose involved which goes beyond the immediate results of the propitiatory work of the Redeemer. So that when his vicarious function shall have reached their completion, the union of the Divine and human natures shall continue to bear a relation to the social economy of the great immortal family in the heavens, and shall for ever subsist, as the principle, or the reason of communication and harmony, among all ranks.

The mystery of redemption has fairly brought all suppositions within our range;—for the most amazing facts

must still be inferior to this. We may say then that, when the Eternal Word took upon him the nature of man, he embraced in one bond of love all intermediate orders. Without annulling real and native inequalities, without degrading the high, for the sake of the low, he brought in a law of relationship, which at once obliges the highest to recognise a dignity, in the lower, without presumption, to take the place assigned them. If analogies or comparisons on such subjects did not spoil our conceptions as much as aid them, we might find illustrations in the history and affairs of men, in some degree applicable to our theme. But at least we may discover in our bosoms a natural sentiment, that will aid the mind in conceiving of the influence which the assumption of our nature by the Divine nature, may exert, in familiarizing the human spirit with other orders—let them be lofty as they may. Shall the elder and princely personages of the celestial polity think it irksome to live as brethren with the race of Adam? Shall they draw off to their privileged quarters, and consort only with their peers? This were to stand aloof from the Throne, or to be distant from Him who is the Visible Manifestation of the Invisible God.

And this great scheme may also serve to illustrate signally, in the view of all beings, the important truth—That, whoever is capable of knowing God, and whoever actually loves Him, is therefore capable of any function, and eligible to any dignity. What is there that may not be known, comprehended, or achieved, by an intelligent agent who has attained to intimate friendship with the Most High? What task is there too arduous to be confined to those whom the Son of God calls his brethren and his friends? If human nature had, in its native construction, lacked any *capital element*—intellectual or moral, that is

possessed by higher orders, it *could not* have admitted of such an alliance as it has. But in the scheme of redemption, the original purpose of the Creator, when he said—"Let us make man in our image," is at once expounded and authenticated, and it is seen that nothing great or illustrious was to be denied him.

Once well harmonized by a principle so efficient as that here spoken of, diversities of rank, power, office, and attainment, existing within the same circle of intercourse, cannot fail to be the source of pleasures and advancement. It is so even on earth, and would be so in a vastly greater degree, if malign and selfish passions were not in operation. Both arrogance and modesty operate as impediments to the expansion of faculties, where self-love is pur-blind, and petulant. If men were jealous of no rivalry—ambitious of no exclusive praise—in fear of no misinterpretations—fretted by no errors of estimation—encumbered by no diffidence (offspring of pride and infirmity);—if, in a word, they were impelled always by the simplest and the most DIRECT motives, the minds of all would start up with a new energy, and move at another rate, than heretofore. On the one hand, the spectacle of signal instances of power and virtue, if the bosoms of all were purged of envy, would furnish an exhilarating motive, that must at once strengthen and animate all minds:—just as the most invigorating warmth is produced on the surface of the earth, not so much by the direct radiance of the sun, as by the reverberation of his rays from the sides of hills—rocks—edifices.

Neither is it in a small degree that the morbid sensitiveness of the selfish principle in the mass of mankind, gives embarrassment to those who are conscious of superior power. The native differences between man and man

are not great enough to break up the system of ostensible equality. The law of equality is therefore maintained in society, as a convenient means of avoiding the collisions of self-love, and the contestations of arrogance and vanity. By a conventional rule, all are to beseem themselves as if all were on a par. But this *figment*, which draws its reason from pride, imposes a real disadvantage upon those who, in complying with it, have, if not to hold their personal advantages in abeyance, at least to assume a posture which in fact makes the native stature of the mind to cringe. Freed effectively from the feelings that arise from this artificial equalization of mankind, how would all powers spring into action !

No such concealment or disadvantage shall belong to the great community of heaven. Even if it were desirable, it could not be effected, in a system which combines inequalities a thousand times greater than any that are to be found among men. But the disguise by which on earth it is attempted to make all men *seem* on a par, will not be needed in heaven; for the blindness of self-love will be dispelled;—the arrogance of ambition will not exist;—nor will envy pine there. And may we again revert to the supposition that the presence and supremacy of the INCARNATE WORLD shall operate among the diverse and unequal orders as a special principle of harmony in which the highest shall find more than motive enough for moderation, and the lowest a motive (most peculiar) that must dispel abject timidity. In Him "all things consist" (things heavenly) who being exalted "far above principalities and powers," brings together, in the mystery of his person, the least and the greatest;—the most recent, and the most ancient of the intelligent tribes.

Of the heavenly edifice, still more emphatically than of

the militant church, it may be affimed, that "Jesus is the key-stone of the pediment, in whom all the structure duly framed, increaseth to a holy temple—even in the Lord." Or the figure being changed—"He is the head, related to which all the members are jointed together, and firmly compacted; so as that by rendering, aecording to their several functions, mutual aid, the entire body coutinually augments itself in power of love." In the doctrine of the human and divine nature of Christ we have an effective principle of sociality among unequal orders; and the more we meditate on the subject, the more shall we see its fitness to answer this purpose; and the more be disposed to think, that without it, no such communion would be practicable.

At least *to the human race* the headship of the Incarnate Word must form the reason of an indissoluble union among all the members. How probable may it seem, on mere grounds of rational calculation, that the protracted eras of eternal life might for ever separate those who, in starting upon such a course, are prepared to move at vastly different rates. So far as such an illustration is applicable to the subject, it may be said that, while the lower and physical powers of human nature are capable of improvement or augmentation only at the rate of *arithmetical progression*, its higher powers of knowledge, intelligence and virtue are susceptible of *geometrical progression:* that is to say, of increase and expansion *by working one upon the other*, as well as by simple accessions. The several intellectual and moral faculties are to each other, when fully put in play, as *multiplicator* and *multiplicand;* and each new product is a new power of acceleration. If so, every initial advantage is an incalculable one, when an endless series is in view. And

it may seem almost inevitable to believe that the difference among the competitors, at a remote stage of their course, will be immeasurably greater than it was at its commencement.

How then shall these *unequal velocities* be kept in harmony? A difficult problem, unless we conceive of all as performing their endless circuits around one and the same Centre of Light. On *this* plan, the wider orbits, always embracing the smaller, shall maintain unity and neighbourhood. Of Him who is the centre of that system it is said, that "the fulness of Deity dwells in him;"—that "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him;"—so that He, standing incomparably above the highest created minds, and yet condescending to maintain familiar intercourse with the feeblest, shall hold all extremes in amity. UNISON is the word which at once characterizes true religion, and describes the upper world. And of this unison Christ is the principle, both in heaven and on earth. Because in heaven "all things are subject to the Son," heaven is happy: and on earth man is not happy, because this is not the fact. And so within the circle of the church there is peace, and joy, and the energy of expansion, when the church is one in Christ:—there is dejection, and doubt, and a sickly or inefficient zeal, when the honour which belongs to Him as the centre of Love, is given to the idols of discord.

"From him every family* in heaven and earth is denominated;"—pregnant words, which at once reveal the

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* Πᾶσα πατρία, not "*the whole family*;" but "*all tribes*," or races. The author is not ignorant that the predication (Ephes. iii. 15) is by some attributed to the Father; but he must profess to hold with those who assign it to the Son.

mysteries of the upper world, and are prophetic of the future condition of mankind. It is even now true that "all in heaven"—those who have reached their perfection are bowing to that name, "which is above every name;" and true also, that the innumerable souls in waiting around the "spiritual tabernacle," though gathered from "many kindreds, and tribes," of earth, rejoice in Him only whose "memorial is with them,"—whose NAME contains the reason of their hope of the expected redemption of the body.

But in its reference to earth, this affirmation is anticipative, or prophetic, in two senses. It must receive its completion, *first*, in the conversion of all tribes of men to the faith of Christ; and then in the utter and final disappearance from the church of those villifying designations, which at present signalize the common appellative —*Christian*, only to defame it, by calling up the recollection, either of corruptions or of strife.

It is indeed true that men—nay multitudes, from all the several stocks or distinctly characterised families of mankind, have become, at some time in the course of eighteen centuries, or are now members of the Christian community; and have, in their several tongues, invoked the sacred name of Jesus, and have bore it as their glory and opprobrium. Every *generic* form of human speech (extant or extinct) has been consecrated as the medium of prayer and praise, addressed to Him, of whom it is declared that, "all nations shall worship Him." But the first fruits are not the harvest. And if we do not misinterpret the most significant and emphatic phrases, the era shall come when, at one and the same time, men of every colour and every dialect shall be called by the name of Christ. Or may we suppose that, even this the best and most comprehensive of all designations, shall then cease

to be thought of, because no longer distinctive, but universal? By what order or means the mighty renovation shall be effected, it does not belong to us confidently to divine;—our part is to use with dilligence, such as are actually in our power; and incessantly to pray that these means, or others, may speedily be made efficacious.

The second sense in which the glory of Christ, as Head over all things, remains to be consummated on earth, is in the final disappearance of all designations but the one which his name confers:—and who can doubt but what the two are intimately connected? This connexion may be predicated in every form—positively and negatively: and in every form it is true. While the church was one, Christianity spread;—or should we not say, burst over the world, and gathered myriads of converts from lands within and far beyond the limits of the Roman empire. When Christians became factious—when other names than the name of Christ were called upon, then the evangelical circle drew in apace: no more conquests were made; or they were conquests purely nominal; and ere long the fierce Avenger of the Lord's quarrel with his church, breaking bounds, sword in hand, from his sultry Arabian sands, drave the distracted flock from field to field, until the Christan name was near to be quite lost from the world.

Nothing effectively was done to retrieve the honours of the cross, or to carry the name of Christ beyond its restricted circle, during the lapse of fourteen centuries. Not even in that bright hour when truth broke at length from its confinement; not even then, when the great trumpet of the Gospel was again loudly blown throughout Christendom, was any voice heard in the wilderness, or the solitary places of the world, calling idolatrous men to sal-

vation. It was indeed a time of TRUTH; but not of LOVE; and therefore, though a season of renovation, was not one of enlargement. And because the church of that day would not, or did not discharge its duty, in zealously attempting to propagate the faith, but rather employed itself in vain jangling, it was soon given up to the spirit of discord; and thence sank through the natural stages of formality, and frivolity, and absurdity—and unbelief.

The sudden reappearance, in our own times, of the primitive zeal for evangelizing the world, has filled all minds with the brightest expectations. And justly. But the expectation is not infallible—nay, may actually prove itself fallacious. This very same holy and benevolent desire to bring all men into the fold of Christ, has heretofore existed in the highest imaginable vigour; but after gathering an abundant harvest, in a brief season, it died away:—the polytheistic world heard no more of the Gospel, century after century. In the course of a thousand years scarcely a single light was carried into the centre of the gross darkness that covered the earth; or if carried, was soon extinguished.

Shall we then learn nothing from the contemplation of such a course of events?—Shall we fear nothing when we have proof before us, that the principles of the Divine government actually admit of the long-continued and almost total withdrawment of efficacious influence from the church?—Shall we take no warning when a lesson like this is drawn out at large in our view, and we see that the Lord adheres to a system of PUBLIC RETRIBUTION, in His conduct towards his people, as a body; and that when they refuse to hearken to his voice in capital matters, He retires, as if in grief, to the recesses of the invisible state, and though he preserves the spark of piety

on earth from extinction—will do no more? Was it not in fact thus, from the sixth to the sixteenth century?

And did there not follow another withdrawment of Divine agency from the church at large, soon after the age of the Reformation? That was a time in which Christians might have returned to the simplicity of charity and fervour; but they did not: and He whose commands were slighted drew back.

It is now confidently believed on all hands that no such punitive abandonment of the church is any more to be feared. But on what does this confidence rest? There are two grounds on which it *might* rest with some degree of assurance. Of these the *first* would be the fact of an open, and unquestionable prevalence, throughout the protestant communities, of a spirit of contrition, on account, both of the corruptions and the discords that exist, and have so long existed, within them; together with a cordial expression of willingness to make, or admit, all necessary reforms; and especially a hearty desire to compose all feuds. Is this then the actual state of things?—And is this the source of the confidence we indulge, that the Lord will not again withdraw Himself from his church? —Alas!—dare we profess it?

The second source from which such an expectation might be drawn, would be, the indubitable import of the prophetic Scriptures, declaring that, *notwithstanding all appearances of an opposite kind*, the "bright appearance of the Lord drew nigh." But is our argument settled, and our path ascertained on this ground? None but the most presumptuous will say so. Even without controverting any of the best established conclusions of modern prophetical exposition, there is room for the supposition that Christianity, may yet have to sustain a signal

reverse; and once more be driven in upon its very centre.

Without pretending to deny that a far more agreeable supposition may be entertained, it may be surmised, as not altogether improbable—That after the several reformed communities, in the old and the new world, have enjoyed their now current term of reanimation—a term fast running out, and have distinctly been called to repentance, and have deliberately refused to give heed to that call, and have replied—"We need not—will not do otherwise than we do; or than our fathers have done"—that then the fatal decree shall go out;—not audible indeed by mortal ears; but certain enough in its effects. Unbelief, and secularity, and strife, shall rush abroad, and make an easy conquest. Perhaps the work of devastation may be consummated by temporal judgments, and the enemies of the Gospel may be looking every moment for its expulsion from the world.

Meanwhile, in some *new quarter*, where the soil is yet unbroken, the imperishable seed shall be seen to have fallen into "good ground," and shall rapidly spring up, and the religion of Christ appear in its glory, and put on colours that are not to fade. The Lord himself shall "plant *in the wilderness*" the beauty of Paradise: and shall "set *in the desert*" the verdure of heaven;—"and the nations shall see and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this; and the Holy One of Israel hath created it!"

THE END.